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ABSTRACT

This report describes Blalock FIRST, a 3-year collaborative research project designed to improve literacy skills of low-income, African American families living in a severely depressed urban housing project. Project implementation, and antecedents to the implementation, are described. Objectives of the project were to: (1) increase achievement in reading and mathematics of students in kindergarten through grade 7; (2) increase student attendance; (3) reduce the number of students in remedial programs; (4) increase student's self-esteem; (5) increase teacher expectations for student achievement; (6) implement the Classroom Improvement Support System project (CISS); (7) increase involvement and cooperation of students' families; and (8) increase community involvement in school activities. A narrative evaluation of the project, and a description of the ways in which project results were disseminated, are included. The report concludes with a summary and discussion of the project's impact, noting that all but one of the project objectives were achieved or partially achieved. Appendixes include charts describing programs and the implementation of objectives by year; and a list of dissemination efforts, including books, articles, media products, and conference presentations. (MM)

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BLALOCK FIRST:

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY & THE ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FINAL REPORT

Center for the Study of Adult Literacy

Georgia State University Atlanta, Georgia

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BLALOCK FIRST:

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY & THE ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FINAL REPORT

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December 1992

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Executive Summary

Blalock FIRST was a three-year demonstration research project developed by the Center for the Study of Adult Literacy at Georgia State University and the Atlanta Public Schools at Blalock Elementary School. The overall goal of the project was to improve the literacy skills of the families in the community by extending the classroom into the home. The first year was a pilot year due to partial funding, with full implementation in Years Two and Three.

All of the 480 children in Kindergarten through Grade 7 at Blalock Elementary School were from low-income, African-American families, who live in a severely-depressed, urban housing project. They represented below average academic achievement and attendance, and above average retention and remedial program rates.

The specific objectives for Blalock FIRST were:

1. To increase achievement in reading and mathematics of students in Kindergarten through Grade 7.
2. To increase student attendance.
3. To reduce the number of students who are retained and/or placed in remedial programs.
4. To increase the student's self-esteem.
5. To increase teacher expectations for student achievement.
6. To implement the Classroom Improvement Support System project (CISS) in classrooms.
7. To increase the involvement and cooperation of the students' families.
8. To increase the community support for and involvement in the school activities.

The project was staffed by a Project Director, a full-time Instructional Coordinator based at the school, a Graduate Research Assistant, and a Project Administrator. Funds were available to develop programs in the school and community and to provide incentives to the families and teachers for participation.

The Project Director spent the first four months of the project gaining entry into the community and the school. The initial program begun was a Family Literacy Class for parents of children in the school. Later in Year One a Kindergarten Start-up program for mothers and their pre-kindergarten children was organized. Teachers were invited to propose CISS projects, but none were interested the first year. An Attendance Incentive and several Appreciation Events were also held.

In Year Two, with a full staff available, many new initiatives were begun. These included the Viking Center for students with learning and behavior difficulties, Newstart to improve behavior at Field Day, several CISS projects including grade-level Reading Initiatives, an Instructional Reproduction Center, an Afterschool Program for boys, a Girls' Dance Group, and a drama group (Turning Point). The Family Literacy Class, Attendance Incentives, and Appreciation Events were continued.

In Year Three, the Afterschool Program and Family Literacy Class continued as did the Attendance Incentives and Appreciation Events. A Saturday School, a Table Tennis Team, and a Math/Science Lab were added. CISS projects continued on a limited basis.

During the three years of Blalock FIRST, 202 students were served directly in FIRST programs. Another 92 were served indirectly, 81 through their parents' participation in the Family Literacy Class and 11 through their mother's participation in the Kindergarten Start-up. With the participation of teachers and community agencies, virtually every student at Blalock Elementary School was affected by Blalock FIRST.

There was a pattern of scattered significant positive differences in reading and mathematics achievement test scores by grade between participants in individual FIRST programs and non-participants. These differences support the conclusion that FIRST had limited success in increasing Blalock students' achievement in reading and mathematics. Thus, the first

objective was partially achieved. Blalock FIRST was successful in increasing student attendance over the three years of the project and in reducing the number of students retained. The number of students placed in remedial classes, however, increased. Thus, the second objective was attained and the third was partially met. Only a few self-esteem score comparisons were significant, but one of note was the significant increase in self-esteem for children whose parents participated in the Family Literacy Class. Again the fourth objective was only partially met.

Problems occurred in fully implementing the CISS projects, resulting in a failure to change teachers' expectations for student achievement (fifth objective). Some CISS projects were implemented successfully by grade level teams and by the FIRST staff. The sixth objective was partially met.

Parent involvement in the school greatly increased, resulting in an active PTA, parent volunteers, and some parents employed as aides. Community cooperation and participation also greatly increased. The final two objectives of FIRST were met.

The most significant achievement of Blalock FIRST was the changed attitude in the school and community. Interactions among parents, community residents, and school staff were now generally positive. Several initiatives begun by Blalock FIRST have now been incorporated into the school's ongoing program; others have been adopted at the system level. Communication has improved--teachers have begun talking to other teachers; the administration is setting a more deliberate tone in making instructional changes in the school; and parents are taking greater responsibilities in the school and with their children. The influence of the Blalock FIRST program has been felt throughout the community.

Perhaps the greatest effect of Blalock FIRST was on the parents who participated consistently over the three years of the project. Many of them changed from negative, school adversaries to positive, school supporters. In learning positive ways to interact with the school

personnel, these parents opened doors for volunteer and paid participation in the school program. They also became more effective parents and exerted a positive influence on their children. This change in school atmosphere was dramatic and appears to be long-lasting. In the long term, it should also improve student achievement and decrease school drop-outs. If so, Blalock FIRST can be judged a success.

Introduction

Blalock FIRST was a three-year demonstration research project developed by the Center for the Study of Adult Literacy at Georgia State University and the Atlanta Public Schools at Blalock Elementary School. The overall goal of the project was to improve the literacy skills of the families in the community by extending the classroom into the home. The first year the project was only partially funded. Therefore, that year was used as a pilot year with full implementation in Years Two and Three.

All of the 480 children in Kindergarten through Grade 7 at Blalock Elementary School represented low-income, African-American families, who live in a severely depressed urban housing project with very high crime, drug, and delinquency rates. Over half of the students received special instructional assistance (33% in Chapter I and an additional 21% in a state-funded Remedial Education Program). The school had below average attendance and retention rates for the local school system. Parents were only minimally involved in school activities and took little responsibility for their children's schooling. The Parent Teacher Association was non-functional, although there was a newly elected Tenants' Association for the housing project. Only 5% of the parents were employed, the rest being on AFDC and/or welfare. Therefore, their preschool children were ineligible to attend the only child care facility in the housing project, a Title XX Center for children whose parents were employed or in job training. Many of the mothers were teen-age school drop-outs with grandmothers assuming major responsibility for child-rearing. Children came to school with limited preparation. Achievement scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills declined between the Spring of 1987 and 1988. They increased slightly in the Spring of 1989, but were still below average, especially in reading. Scores on the State-wide criterion-referenced tests were also below average in reading and mathematics. Students were at risk of becoming school dropouts within the next few years after leaving elementary

school, perpetuating the cycle of illiteracy, unemployment, teen-age pregnancy, poverty, delinquency, and substance abuse in their community. Blalock FIRST was designed to intervene in this cycle, working through the school, community, and families to change the students' educational opportunities and the families' literacy environment.

Over the three-year research period, a number of different literacy initiatives were implemented. The project staff worked closely with school administrators and teachers and with community agencies to design a Family Literacy Class, a pre-kindergarten mother-child class, school-based resource programs for students, and a classroom instructional support program for teachers. Taken together, these educational improvements were an attempt to change the learning climate at the school and to break the cycle of illiteracy in the community.

The project was staffed by a Project Director, James C. Young, who devoted half of his time to Blalock FIRST, most of it at the school; an Instructional Coordinator, Toren A. Steele, who was in the school full-time in Year Two and half-time in Year Three; a graduate research assistant, who was active at the school in Years One and Two, but not in Year Three; four parents who served as Science Lab Aides on a part-time basis during Year Three, and a Project Coordinator, Joanne R. Nurss, who managed the fiscal and administrative aspects of the project through the Center for the Study of Adult Literacy at Georgia State University.

The budget for Blalock FIRST included funds for incentives for participation and achievement. These funds were used for refreshments (PTA breakfast, literacy lunches, appreciation tea), field trips (theater outing), special equipment (table tennis, science labs), special projects (printing, video production), and awards (pencils, books, mugs). Use of the incentives helped in keeping attendance and participation in the program high and provided a support to the school administration for items not in the school budget.

Objectives

The specific objectives for Blalock FIRST were:

1. To increase achievement in reading and mathematics of students in Kindergarten through Grade 7.
2. To increase student attendance.
3. To reduce the number of students who are retained and/or placed in remedial programs.
4. To increase the student's self-esteem.
5. To increase teacher expectations for student achievement.
6. To implement the Classroom Improvement Support System project (CISS) in classrooms.
7. To increase the involvement and cooperation of the students' families.
8. To increase the community support for and involvement in the school activities.

Implementation of the Project by Year

In Year One reduced funding was received six weeks after the school year began. The initial design called for an Instructional Coordinator to be placed in the school as a liaison between the regular instructional program and the special instructional activities of Blalock FIRST. Due to limited funding, this person could not be hired until the beginning of Year Two. Therefore, most activities in Year One were developed on a small scale or were not implemented at all. In fact, the first year was heavily used to build trust within the community. Even if full funding had been received, it would have taken several months to gain the support and cooperation of parents and teachers.

Antecedents to Implementation. In order to be successful in a school reform project, the research has to be placed in the broader context of the neighborhood and the community. Before implementation begins, the research team needs to become familiar with the community, the

demographics of the neighborhood, and the faculty of the school. Ideally, the researcher's goals and sense of reality are matched with those of the individuals to be served. Two vehicles were used in this project to ensure a match between the researcher and the community: dialogue with the parents and school officials; and observing and listening to the community and its concerns.

In order gain entry into this community, the Project Director spent considerable time visiting with parents and the various "movers and shakers" in the community; i.e., the director of the housing project management office, the director of the recreation center, the head of the resident association, the PTA officers, the principal, and other key school staff. These contacts were an attempt to gain sensitivity to the community and its various factions, including parents and students. The time spent building bridges before actual implementation of the project lessened anxiety on the part of those who were affected by the program.

Another important factor in the project's implementation was the selection of personnel. Initially, the staffing for Blalock FIRST, whose population was primarily single, unemployed African-American mothers, included one male and two females, all African-Americans. The choice of staff was a cornerstone for establishing trust. In hiring qualified staff, the following personal characteristics were considered: caring, commitment, competency, and openness to change.

Blalock FIRST's Project Director had had many years experience working with the city school system and the public housing authority. This background was very important in gaining the respect and trust of the families and the community and school leadership. The project team demonstrated commitment to the project through long hours in the community and through both formal and informal participation in many community events. Gradually members of the Blalock community came to be willing participants in the project allowing many programs to be implemented to meet the specific objectives of the project.

The curriculum of Blalock FIRST evolved from what was described by parents as their particular needs rather than from the staff's preconceived ideas. The Family Literacy Class evolved into a combination of literacy instruction, parent education, and response to parent's social concerns. Other programs evolved from the teachers' concerns about student behavior and progress. Thus, the community's goals and needs governed the specific Blalock FIRST programs and their implementation.

Year One--Pilot. In the winter of Year One, a breakfast meeting for the parents was held at the school and was attended by forty parents--more parents than had been at the school to attend a meeting in recent memory! The principal took advantage of the situation of having so many parents in attendance to share with them other resources in the school. The school social worker, counselor, food manager, and several other staff members were introduced, and Blalock FIRST was described. Parents asked how the project would directly benefit their children. Some parents indicated that they did not have the skills to help children with their homework. Others indicated that mathematics, as it was now taught, was very different from what they had been taught and that the same was true for other subjects. Parents were asked if they would be willing to come to the school once or twice a week to participate in a Family Literacy Class which might address their particular concerns. Several agreed.

The Family Literacy Class (See Appendix A for a detailed description of each Blalock FIRST program) ran from February through May, increasing parent involvement to a level that had never been seen before in the school. At the end of the year, a parents' Appreciation Day was held, and the project was written up in the local newspaper.

Teachers were aware of parents coming to the school, participating in the Family Literacy Class as well as eating lunch in the school cafeteria. Teachers used this access to parents to share with them information about the school curriculum and how their children were

progressing. They also praised parents for getting involved in Blalock FIRST. For the first time, parents could be seen in the school on a regular basis interacting in a positive, rather than in a confrontational manner. There even were some volunteer initiatives with parents serving as cafeteria monitors and helping out on one or two other occasions around the school.

A very successful Attendance Incentive was implemented to raise attendance prior to standardized testing. An ice cream party was held for those with perfect attendance during the target weeks.

Reviewing the low level of reading and mathematics achievement in the school, it became apparent that early intervention was needed. A ten-week pilot Kindergarten Start-up program (see Appendix A) was begun. A kit of materials to be used to develop skills and concepts expected of kindergarten children was prepared (e. g. crayons, books, puzzles). Parents and children attended together. Parents learned how to read to children, to interact verbally with them, and to respond to their children's questions. The kindergarten teachers reported that there was a difference in initial performance between children in the program and those who did not participate.

The Family Literacy Program helped parents understand their role in the school, in supporting their children, and in the PTA. The teachers were very appreciative of having had the parents involved because there was a spill-over effect with respect to the children's homework and the parents' positive involvement around the school. Toward the end of the year, information was presented to the teachers about another part of Blalock FIRST--the Classroom Instruction Support System project (CISS). They discussed ways they could improve instruction in the areas of mathematics and reading. Unfortunately, most were not open to this idea. A self-assessment of instruction survey was given to each teacher to complete, but none were returned. The school year closed with a workshop on the concept of team building--its

advantages and disadvantages and how it could be used in planning, implementation, and developing new strategies for children. It was hoped that teachers would be ready to fully participate in Blalock FIRST the next school year.

Year Two. Full funding was available for Year Two. The Instructional Coordinator was hired and began working full-time at Blalock Elementary School. The Family Literacy Class continued and published a volume of their writings, Muted Cries. Many new programs were initiated. A Family Resource Room was set up in the basement of the school to house the Family Literacy Class and other Blalock FIRST programs. It was furnished with comfortable furniture donated by a local furniture warehouse; tables, chairs, and bookcases provided by the school; and kitchen appliances furnished by the Atlanta Housing Authority. It became a place parents and children congregated for informal discussion with the Blalock FIRST staff.

In Year Two there were changes in the school administration at Blalock which affected the implementation of Blalock FIRST. One month after the opening of school, the principal, who had been involved both in planning and piloting Blalock FIRST, was transferred to another school. His replacement, a central office administrator, was there from October to February when a new principal was assigned. This interim principal was initially concerned about the impact of the project on the school. She perceived her job, in large part, to tighten the administration of the school. Thus, pressure on teachers increased especially related to issues such as following the school system's arrival and departure times both for teachers and students. She also was concerned about discipline and student behavior before and after school, in the corridors, and in the cafeteria. The interim principal began by setting the tone for order. She re-issued copies of the system policy for a work day; increased the amount of monitoring in the hallways; ended breakfast on time so that school could begin promptly at 8:00 a.m.; posted rules for appropriate conduct in the cafeteria; kept doors closed in order to reduce the level of noise

in the building; required teachers to escort their class out of the building promptly at 2:30 p.m.; and held each teacher accountable for the whereabouts of their students during the day. Setting the tone for school-wide order put teachers on notice and served to increase the expectation of uniformity in behavior for students overall. Blalock FIRST continued and eventually won the interim principal's whole-hearted support. However, the staff operated more cautiously and developed more self-contained programs during this time period. The new principal came in February and remained through Year Three. He was quite open to the project, but relatively inexperienced in elementary school administration. Gradually, he came to rely heavily on the Blalock FIRST staff for guidance in administration, especially as related to the elementary instructional program.

Efforts were made again to involve teachers in the Classroom Improvement Support System project (CISS) (see Appendix A). This attempt proved to be somewhat of a problem. Teachers were again asked to complete a self-assessment of instruction survey, considering their strengths and weaknesses and how Blalock FIRST could assist them to improve or change. There was a reluctance on the part of teachers to participate in CISS, given their day-to-day classroom responsibilities. They did complete the self-assessment, however, indicating that they were anxious to improve the performance of children and to increase the involvement of parents. But, they felt that as trained teachers they did not need assistance. The problems lay, they believed, with the parents and the children.

Participation in CISS was voluntary, although it was highly supported by the principal. Gradually, teachers began visiting the Family Resource Room on an individual basis to observe and discuss specific instructional and behavioral problems and to seek strategies which they subsequently used in their classrooms. As teachers began to feel more comfortable, a few volunteered to do CISS projects.

Teachers who did not choose to participate essentially stood back to watch what took place. As a result of the degree of success that participating teachers had with their projects, by the end of the year, there was a greater openness as a faculty to talk with project staff about their concerns around the school.

In an effort to get more manipulatives into the classrooms, the Blalock FIRST staff suggested that, as a part of CISS, teachers participate with parents in an Instructional Reproduction Center (see Appendix A) where they could make games to be used in the classroom to reinforce skills and concepts. No teachers were interested in participating, so this center became a parent activity. The center operated effectively in the Family Resource Room and eventually teachers dropped by to talk with parents and Blalock FIRST staff about their needs for and use of instructional materials.

Although individual teachers were reluctant to undertake a CISS project, several were implemented by grade level teams of teachers with guidance and support from the FIRST Instructional Coordinator. A skills inventory was administered to determine baseline information on mastery levels of second grade children in reading and mathematics. This information was presented to the faculty who were encouraged to expand their use of learning centers to provide opportunities to accommodate differences in learning styles and reinforce instructional concepts. Centers used a variety of instructional materials, including manipulatives, audio-visual equipment, printed materials, computers, and software. Appropriate levels of instruction were determined by review of the skills inventory, test results, observations of student performance, and consultation with Atlanta Public Schools curriculum personnel and the local school curriculum coordinator.

The Reading Improvement Initiatives were planned and implemented cooperatively with classroom teachers at various grade levels as CISS projects. Third and fourth grade teachers

developed a school store in which children who had demonstrated acceptable behavior and learning sold school supplies. They gained experience in ordering, bookkeeping, and selling. Second grade teachers developed a project to expand children's vocabulary and fifth grade teachers worked with children to publish a classroom newspaper. The Remedial Education Program (REP) teachers encouraged children to read children's classics. Two school-wide programs, Railing to Read, which encouraged home reading for all children in the school, and Test-taking Skills, which taught test-taking skills to all children prior to the annual standardized testing, were implemented. Finally, the Counselor began a Celebrity Readers program in which fourth grade students practiced reading picture storybooks and then read them one-on-one to kindergarten children.

While these teacher-initiated projects resulted in the identified outcomes for a short period, teachers generally were not willing to sustain their efforts once the initial project period had ended. Consequently, many of the behaviors that had improved with intervention did not generalize. It became obvious to the Blalock FIRST staff that they must provide direct services to children. Thus, two major instructional initiatives, the Viking Center and Newstart, were implemented.

For the Viking Center (see Appendix A), teachers were asked to identify those children who, at the end of the day, were the most disruptive. About twenty children from kindergarten through grade 7, mostly boys, were named. These children came to the Viking Center for a forty-minute program of structured activities with manipulatives. Behavior modification techniques were used to improve student behavior. Materials included print, games, books, craft and art materials, and audio-visual equipment. The instructional environment was changed, instructional presentations shortened, and students allowed to move between work stations during class periods. Student opinions were solicited, activities kept brief, and students openly

praised for small successes. There were specific, clear expectations of student behavior. It was explained to children that the program's goal was to have them find alternate strategies for controlling their behavior. Children who were not willing to work on their behavior were dismissed from the program. Dismissal of one or two had a direct effect on the other children, causing them to make the commitment to be actively involved in improving their behavior. Teachers were invited to observe and parents to serve as volunteers in the Viking Center. Initially, the teachers felt it was nice that children were seen in a positive setting at the end of the day. What they began to see over time, however, were changes in children's behavior at other times and in other settings. Individual teachers began to talk to project staff to get some specific guidance in working with specific children in their classrooms.

What really convinced teachers that changes were taking place at the school was the expansion of the Viking Center concept to the school-wide initiative, Newstart (see Appendix A). Newstart began because of a serious disruption at Field Day the previous year, requiring that Field Day be cancelled. The Physical Education teacher proposed a CISS project which evolved into Newstart. Only children who had shown progress in Newstart would be allowed to participate in Field Day later that spring. Newstart involved one-third of the students in the school, those identified by teachers who needed to participate in a six-week behavioral program enabling them to begin to be responsible for their own behavior. It was demonstrated to teachers that the children were capable of performing appropriately and successfully and of evaluating their own behavior at the end of each day. The monitoring process brought into focus for both children and teachers the kinds of behaviors that got children into trouble and the strategies that kept them on task and out of trouble. By May, all but six children were able to participate in the Field Day activities. Newstart had significantly changed the children's behavior, and they were rewarded with a successful, fun Field Day experience!

The Afterschool Program (see Appendix A) was begun because there was very little in the community for boys to do after school. Most of the teachers expressed concern about boys, saying that they did not know quite what to do with them. Boys were disruptive; 90% of the children sent to the office were boys, a profile consistent with problems in the Atlanta Public Schools with African-American boys who make up a large percentage of drop-outs, attendance problems, and special education classes, especially behavioral disorders. An Afterschool Program seemed like a possible solution. Boys in Grades 3 through 7 were invited to participate.

The underlying idea of the Afterschool Program was to provide a set of experiences that would contribute to the boy's self-esteem and possibly spill over into their doing a little better in their school work, at home, and in the community. The program was held four days a week, Monday through Thursday, from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m. As many as thirty-five boys attended on some days; the average attendance was about twenty. Boys were required to do their homework immediately upon arrival. When finished, they could engage in individual reading or play instructional games. Athletic equipment was also available for the boys to engage in physical development activities. Equipment included weights, jump ropes, tumbling mats, and a rowing machine.

This was followed by group activities in oral expression, including memorizing and reciting inspirational poems and giving impromptu, "soapbox" speeches. Other character-building activities including the boys' physical presentation were planned. The major Afterschool Program project during Year Two was to make individual garden boxes. The boys planned and executed the building of their boxes and then planted and tended their gardens. The activity involved oral language, questioning, listening, reading, mathematics, science, writing, problem-solving, and the use of power and hand tools. This integrated project was a new and exciting learning experience for the boys.

There was some concern that the Afterschool Program was only for boys, resulting in the formation of the Girls' Dance Group (see Appendix A). It was sponsored by Blalock FIRST and taught on Saturday mornings by a local high school student at the neighborhood community center. Parents served as volunteer coordinators of the program and were responsible for attendance at the Saturday lessons and for supervising the mid-week practice sessions. Those girls who attended regularly made progress and the class was extended several months longer than planned.

Turning Point (see Appendix A), a girls' drama group, met for six-weeks at the end of the year to develop and perform a play. Together with the Girls' Dance Group, and joined by the boys from the Afterschool Program and parents from the Family Literacy Class, they put on a play, Tribute to Women of Color, which was also shown on a local educational television station (see Appendix A).

Another Blalock FIRST effort during Year Two was a "Focus on Family" enrichment night (see Appendix A). It was led by a community volunteer. Activities centered around areas that would help families to work in a more supportive way and that would enrich the quality of family life. Dinner meetings were held several times per month at the school.

Appreciation Events (see Appendix A) were planned for parents and teachers to increase self-esteem and reward their cooperation. Mothers in the Family Literacy Class were given a rose on Valentine's Day; and, for Mothers' Day, an appreciation tea was planned for mothers of girls in the Dance Group, and a mother-son banquet was held for mothers of boys in the Afterschool Program. Refreshments were provided in the teachers' lounge for teachers several times each month and teachers were given Blalock FIRST mugs to help them feel a part of the program. These events helped to create a positive atmosphere in Blalock Elementary School.

An Attendance Initiative was again implemented. Students with perfect attendance for the 30 days prior to Field Day were given a pizza party.

At the close of Year Two, the Instructional Coordinator had a fairly objective assessment of the strengths and the weaknesses of the teachers at the school, having worked with them in a variety of ways over the course of the year. In talking with the principal, a number of recommendations were made by the Blalock FIRST staff with respect to changes in teaching assignments in order to enhance and improve instruction and resolve some behavior problems. It had been observed that teachers, while fairly capable, were usually not willing to make changes unless formally requested by immediate supervisors, and unless the change was in some way tied to their job performance. Reassignment to a new grade level necessitated these teachers becoming familiar with different-aged children and their needs, and required them to consider new curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching strategies. Additionally, new relationships were established and different teachers had an opportunity to take on new responsibilities and leadership roles. Recommendations were made so that the strongest teachers were in the primary grades with at least one strong teacher per grade, kindergarten through third. Some teachers made the changes willingly, others had a great deal of difficulty in being asked to take on new assignments. In the final analysis, it turned out to benefit the entire school. Teachers who had strengths as disciplinarians were moved to a position where those skills were most needed; the same procedure was followed for teachers who were nurturers. Individual children were also considered and suggestions were made to disperse the more challenging children among teachers and to provide additional counseling services for them. Feedback from the principal supported the changes that were made. He requested input on staffing patterns for future school years when his staff would be reduced by six teachers as a result of the sixth and seventh grades being placed at the middle school.

Year Three. Beginning Year Three was relatively easy as the project was well-known in the school and the community and the principal did not change. Some of the same parents were still in the Family Literacy Class and volunteering regularly in the school. There were some new parents and some new teachers. The teacher reorganization described above was in place. The goal for Year Three was to institutionalize many of the programs that had been successful in Years One and Two.

Programs for Year Three included two from the previous year, the Family Literacy Class and the Afterschool Program for boys; three new programs, a Table Tennis Team, a Saturday School, and a Math/Science Lab; and the ongoing support for faculty proposing CISS projects. The Family Literacy Class met on Wednesdays and, the Afterschool Programs for boys continued on Mondays through Thursdays. This year all boys from grades 1 through 7 were eligible. Approximately twenty to thirty boys consistently took advantage of this program. Only two CISS projects were implemented during Year Three. Midway through Year Three, illness forced the Instructional Lead Teacher to work only half-time. This meant that several programs had to be curtailed. However, it allowed funds to be used to pay Math/Science Lab aides (see below).

The Family Literacy Class continued to provide instruction in the skills parents needed to support their children's schooling as well as to increase their own literacy proficiency. As a step toward institutionalizing the program, the Blalock FIRST staff began working cooperatively with the Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library. A new satellite library had opened next to the school and a PALS laboratory (computerized adult literacy program for low level readers) had been installed. Working cooperatively with the library, Blalock FIRST's literacy efforts were gradually transferred to the Library.

A new initiative for Blalock FIRST in Year Three was the Table Tennis Team (see Appendix A). The organizer of the team was a teacher at Blalock Elementary School, who serves on the Olympic Committee for table tennis. The team included students in grades 1 through 7. They practiced daily after school and played in the City Recreation Department's Table Tennis League. A weekly practice time was also arranged at the recreation center during the summer.

Another new initiative was the Math/Science Lab (see Appendix A). It was monitored daily by four parents who had been active in the Family Literacy Class. Blalock FIRST purchased science laboratory and mathematics manipulative materials and paid the parent aides. A schedule was developed to ensure that every class had time in the lab with extra time for third and fifth grades to prepare for the standardized test in science. A church that was active in the community became interested in supporting the Math/Science Lab in years to come.

Saturday School (see Appendix A) was the final new initiative in Year Three, providing an opportunity for tutoring on basic skills prior to the standardized achievement testing. Volunteers from two local colleges with predominantly African-American students (Morehouse and Spelman) met for eight Saturdays with first through seventh grade students in small groups with two volunteers per group. Parents were sent a letter describing the program and approximately 60 students enrolled. Two and one-half hours were spent on language arts, mathematics, and test-taking skills. The last half hour was for group interaction and refreshments, designed to provide positive role models for the students.

In Year Three, skills inventories were implemented system-wide, and a new reading initiative (a CISS project) occurred in the fourth grade. The students developed questions about dinosaurs that they were interested in researching at the library. Upon completing the research,

they made oral presentations in the class. A field trip to the dinosaur exhibit at the zoo was the reward.

To improve behavior management, the entire student body participated in an art initiative, another CISS project. It was designed to increase appropriate classroom behavior and to increase participation in retention of skills and concepts. Students were provided with specific codes of conduct by which they were measured. Behavior was monitored daily. Those students receiving the most number of stamps for appropriate behavior were allowed to select small art related items or food treats as a reward. Parents were asked to review behavioral expectations with their students and to agree to attend a school conference if student behavior did not improve.

Within the school, the counselor established a Crisis Intervention Center. The counselor had observed many of the Family Literacy Class sessions and other Blalock FIRST programs such as the Viking Center and Newstart during the previous year. Children whose behavior was disruptive in the school or children experiencing a crisis at home came to the Crisis Intervention Center and engaged in activities similar to those in the Viking Center and Newstart.

The school also had an Attendance Incentive with a contest to design attendance buttons, and the Atlanta Public Schools instituted a system-wide attendance incentive during this year. Appreciation Events during Year Three included refreshments for teachers and lunches for the Family Literacy Class.

The school now had a number of parents who were daily volunteers in the school. One parent in particular, who had been in the Kindergarten Start-up Program, volunteered throughout the school for the entire year. Four other mothers who had been long time members in the Family Literacy Class became regular volunteers in the school during critical times of the day, i.e., mornings, lunch, and dismissal. Mothers of children in kindergarten met for several

weeks (without their children) to learn to use the Kindergarten Start-up kits with their children.

Community involvement and cooperation also increased in Year Three. The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Northwest District met with school officials and was able to compliment some of Blalock FIRST's initiatives. They provided resource people and/or incentives to classroom teachers by grade level to enable teachers to begin new instructional initiatives. One such project was to provide movie passes to children who performed well, attended regularly, and behaved appropriately. Another was to provide transportation to various field trips for students exhibiting similar behaviors.

Other community collaborative efforts included support of "Our Heroes," a program co-sponsored with MARTA (Atlanta's transit system) to identify people in the community who had been supportive of Blalock Elementary School. Cooperation with Families in Action, the community-based drug prevention/rehabilitation program, continued though co-sponsorship of a gardening program. The culminating activity was a judging of the best organized and kept garden as well as the best produce grown. Blalock FIRST provided gift certificates for the purchase of garden tools and other materials to continue maintenance of the garden.

At the end of the third year of Blalock FIRST, there were indications around the school of a changed atmosphere and environment for learning in the cafeteria and corridors before and after school, and throughout the school day in certain teachers' classrooms. There were differences in children's behavior and in the behavior of teachers and parents. Now teachers and parents were communicating in a rather civil manner. There were staffing meetings where teachers and parents talked about solutions to problems. There were faculty who were now working together as a grade level team to bring about solutions to instructional problems. There was interaction with the school's leadership team and opportunities for them to interact with project staff as well as to work with teachers on individual instructional improvement initiatives.

The Blalock FIRST Instructional Coordinator and the school's Instructional Lead Teacher met to consider many of the initiatives, including CISS, the Saturday School, the Viking Center, and Newstart, and to find ways these activities could enhance school-wide staff development and inservice education. The principal was very open to suggestions and implemented many of the recommendations from Blalock FIRST staff.

Looking across the three years, the major impact of Blalock FIRST on the school appears to be the tone that was set. From the beginning, cooperation with the parents, the community, the administration, and the children was evident. Some objectives were not met. But there was a willingness to listen as people came forth and, for the most part, the project was able to respond to expressed concerns.

The activities implemented in Blalock FIRST were designed to meet specific project objectives. These activities are listed by objective in Appendix B.

Evaluation of Objectives

During the three years of Blalock FIRST, 202 students were served directly in FIRST programs. Another 92 were served indirectly, 81 through their parents' participation in the Family Literacy Class and 11 through their mother's participation in the Kindergarten Start-up. Further, the teachers who participated in CISS projects provided additional indirect service to children. It is fair to say that essentially every child at Blalock Elementary School was served in some way by Blalock FIRST over the three years of the project. All the students were low-income, African-American children who lived in the Bankhead Courts housing project adjacent to the school. Many lived in single parent homes; many in extended family homes. Included in the group served directly or indirectly through their parents' participation were 165 boys and 129 girls in grades kindergarten through 7. Distribution of these students by grade level was:

Grade Level	Number
Kindergarten	11
Grade 1	20
2	65
3	49
4	66
5	48
6	26
7	9

Participation by kindergarten, first, sixth, and seventh graders was somewhat lower than that by children in the other grades.

In order to evaluate Blalock FIRST, achievement test scores in reading and mathematics, measures of student self-concept, attendance data, and data on retention and placement in remedial programs (Chapter I and REP) were collected and compared. These data are presented below by objective. Narrative evaluations of the program, by year, were also written by the project staff as a way of documenting the implementation and impact of the project. They are presented in the following section.

Results by Objective. Objective 1: To increase achievement in reading and mathematics of the students in Kindergarten through Grade 7. Tables 1 and 2 present by year and by program across grades the means, standard deviations, and t tests for Reading and Mathematics subtest scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for students participating in Blalock FIRST as compared with those not participating directly in any of the activities (non-FIRST). Significant differences were shown in reading for students whose mothers attended the Family Literacy Class in Year One and for students in Turning Point in Year Two. Students in the Dance Group had significantly higher mathematics scores also in Year Two. The students selected to participate in Newstart and the Viking Center in Year Two were low achievers most in need of special assistance. This selection process is reflected in the significantly lower reading scores

Table 1. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Reading Subtest for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Year & by Program across Grades

GROUP Program	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Mean	SD	t*	n	Mean	SD	t*	n	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST Afterschool	--	--	--	--	4.19	1.29	-0.42	16	4.08	1.11	-0.37	12
Dance Group	--	--	--	--	4.84	1.76	1.51	25	--	--	--	--
Literacy Class	4.69	1.88	1.87*	24	4.19	1.39	-0.60	36	4.57	0.73	0.63	7
Newstart	--	--	--	--	3.58	1.46	-3.58**	65	--	--	--	--
Saturday School	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.12	1.31	-0.47	52
Table Tennis	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5.00	0.63	1.23	5
Turning Point	--	--	--	--	5.33	1.18	2.26*	12	--	--	--	--
Viking Center	--	--	--	--	3.46	1.45	-2.11*	13	--	--	--	--
Non-FIRST students	4.09	1.74	--	186	4.35	1.47	--	162	4.23	1.39	--	86

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs
* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.005$

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Table 2. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Mathematics Subtest for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Year & by Program across Grades

GROUP Program	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Mean	SD	t*	n	Mean	SD	t*	n	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST Afterschool	--	--	--	--	5.00	1.50	1.43	14	5.25	1.42	1.13	12
Dance Group	--	--	--	--	5.36	1.98	2.69*	25	--	--	--	--
Literacy Class	5.11	1.82	1.37	36	4.60	1.59	0.67	35	4.33	1.11	-0.32	6
Newstart	--	--	--	--	4.13	1.51	-1.16	64	--	--	--	--
Saturday School	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.69	1.94	0.29	52
Table Tennis	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5.80	0.75	1.38	5
Turning Point	--	--	--	--	5.08	1.32	1.43	12	--	--	--	--
Viking Center	--	--	--	--	4.07	1.87	-1.37	14	--	--	--	--
Non-FIRST students	4.69	1.66	--	186	4.40	1.61	--	161	4.59	1.96	--	86

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs $p < 0.005$

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demonstrated by these students. Tables 3 and 4 present these same achievement results by grade level and year across programs. There were significant positive differences between children who participated in FIRST and those who did not, in reading in Year One at grade 5, and Year Three at grades 4 and 7; and in mathematics in Year One at grades 2 and 3, and Year Two at grades 3, 6, and 7. In Year Two at grade 4 and Year Three at grade 2, there were significant negative differences in reading scores, indicating that the non-FIRST children scored higher than the FIRST participants.

Tables 5 and 6 present the reading and mathematics achievement data broken down by program, by grade, and by year for the FIRST and non-FIRST groups. Participants in the Afterschool program had significantly higher scores in mathematics for boys in grade 3 in Year Two and grade 5 in Year Three. The Saturday School students (Year Three) had significantly higher scores in reading for students in grade 4 and in mathematics in grades 5 and 7. Scores in reading were significantly lower for students in grade 1 in both reading and mathematics, indicating perhaps that parents chose to send first graders who were not achieving to the Saturday School program. Sixth grade girls attending Turning Point (Year Two) had significantly higher scores in both reading and mathematics than did those not participating, but there were no differences for seventh grade girls. Fifth grade students participating in Table Tennis in Year Three had significantly higher mathematics scores than did non-participating students. Finally, third grade girls in the Dance Group in Year Two demonstrated significantly higher scores in reading and mathematics.

Another way to look for effects of FIRST on student achievement is to consider the test score gains for students participating in FIRST from one year to the next (see Tables 7 and 8). Across grades and programs there were no significant differences in reading scores, but there was a significant decrease in mathematics scores in Year Two. Looking separately by grade and

Table 3. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Reading Subtest for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Grade & by Year across Programs

	Year 1					Year 2					Year 3				
GROUP	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST	--	--	--	--	--	1	4.47	1.85	1.05	19	2	3.56	1.37	-2.29*	16
	1	5.38	1.62	0.71	26	2	3.59	1.59	0.45	34	3	3.26	1.37	-1.27	19
	2	3.79	1.96	0.76	24	3	4.72	1.48	0.44	29	4	4.26	0.85	1.98*	19
	3	4.63	1.42	0.64	27	4	4.09	1.23	-1.90*	32	5	4.67	1.04	-0.45	21
	4	4.04	1.29	-0.38	27	5	3.79	1.54	-0.24	28	6	3.89	1.45	-0.29	18
	5	4.60	1.62	3.16**	15	6	4.38	1.45	1.54	16	7	5.10	1.30	2.24*	10
	6	4.17	1.34	-1.16	6	7	5.00	1.07	0.66	7	--	--	--	--	--
Non-FIRST	--	--	--	--	--	1	4.94	1.41	--	36	2	4.67	1.45	--	18
	1	5.00	2.05	--	21	2	3.59	1.29	--	17	3	3.85	1.17	--	13
	2	3.41	1.67	--	29	3	4.47	1.53	--	19	4	3.50	1.20	--	10
	3	4.36	1.81	--	36	4	4.60	1.10	--	25	5	4.86	1.46	--	14
	4	4.18	1.49	--	33	5	3.88	1.49	--	17	6	4.06	1.47	--	18
	5	3.33	1.25	--	46	6	3.68	1.33	--	22	7	4.07	1.00	--	15
	6	4.52	1.54	--	31	7	4.63	1.36	--	27	--	--	--	--	--

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs
* $p<0.05$
** $p<0.005$

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Table 4. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Mathematics Subtest for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Grade & by Year across Programs

	Year 1					Year 2					Year 3				
GROUP	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST	–	–	–	–	–	1	4.68	1.62	-0.72	19	2	5.12	1.87	0.68	17
	1	5.85	2.21	-0.18	26	2	4.42	1.86	0.66	33	3	3.89	2.17	0.62	19
	2	5.96	1.86	2.59**	24	3	5.31	1.91	1.93*	29	4	4.63	1.27	0.06	19
	3	5.59	1.31	2.76**	27	4	5.19	1.42	1.00	32	5	5.10	1.61	1.45	20
	4	4.89	1.03	1.03	27	5	3.86	1.46	0.34	28	6	4.00	1.37	-0.36	18
	5	4.80	1.76	0.92	15	6	4.75	1.48	1.90*	16	7	5.18	2.08	0.27	11
	6	4.33	0.94	-0.49	6	7	5.43	1.59	2.19*	7	–	–	–	–	–
Non-FIRST	–	–	–	–	–	1	5.00	1.51	–	35	2	6.44	2.11	–	18
	1	5.95	1.43	–	21	2	4.06	1.73	–	17	3	3.46	1.50	–	13
	2	4.63	1.89	–	30	3	4.32	1.42	–	19	4	4.60	1.56	–	10
	3	4.53	1.64	–	36	4	4.83	1.21	–	24	5	4.29	1.58	–	14
	4	4.56	1.22	–	32	5	3.71	1.36	–	17	6	4.18	1.62	–	17
	5	4.38	1.75	–	39	6	3.81	1.50	–	21	7	4.07	1.39	–	15
	6	4.67	1.42	–	30	7	4.50	1.74	–	28	–	–	–	–	–

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs
* $p<0.05$
** $p<0.01$
*** $p<0.005$

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Table 5. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Reading Subtest for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Year, by Grade, & by Program

GROUP Program	Year 1					Year 2					Year 3				
	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST Afterschool	--	--	--	--	--	3	4.56	1.42	0.15	9	4	3.83	1.07	0.55	6
	--	--	--	--	--	4	4.10	1.04	-1.24	10	5	4.75	0.83	-0.20	8
Dance Group	--	--	--	--	--	2	4.67	1.97	1.54	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	3	5.83	1.57	1.88*	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	4	4.50	1.12	-0.20	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	5	4.57	1.92	0.97	7	--	--	--	--	--
Literacy Class	1	5.45	1.92	0.62	11	2	3.73	1.21	0.56	11	3	3.67	0.47	-0.26	3
	2	4.50	2.87	1.27	4	3	4.80	0.75	0.54	5	--	--	--	--	--
	3	5.29	1.48	1.12	7	4	4.63	0.99	0.16	8	5	5.00	0.82	0.16	3
	4	3.86	1.46	-0.57	7	5	4.50	2.06	0.74	6	--	--	--	--	--
	5	4.00	0.00	1.23	5	6	3.67	1.25	-0.15	3	--	--	--	--	--
	6	3.50	1.50	-0.93	2	7	4.50	0.50	-0.16	2	--	--	--	--	--
Newstart	--	--	--	--	--	1	4.67	2.87	-0.29	3	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	2	3.45	1.40	-0.96	20	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	3	4.86	0.83	0.63	7	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	4	3.31	1.14	-3.40**	13	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	5	3.25	1.35	-1.27	16	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	6	3.40	1.02	-0.44	5	--	--	--	--	--

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Table 5. (Continued)

GROUP Program	Year 1					Year 2					Year 3				
	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
Saturday School	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	3.67	1.35	-2.03*	15
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	3.71	1.75	-0.22	7
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	4.40	0.49	2.19*	10
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	4.82	1.11	-0.08	11
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6	3.83	1.34	0.34	6
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	4.33	0.94	0.41	3
Table Tennis	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5.00	0.63	0.21	5
Turning Point	--	--	--	--	--	6	5.11	1.20	2.80**	9	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	7	6.00	0.82	1.69	3	--	--	--	--	--
Viking Center	--	--	--	--	--	2	3.00	1.29	-0.96	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	3	4.50	1.12	0.04	4	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	4	2.00	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	5	3.33	1.25	-0.60	3	--	--	--	--	--
Non-FIRST	--	--	--	--	--	1	5.00	1.51	--	35	2	6.44	2.11	--	18
	1	5.95	1.43	--	21	2	4.06	1.73	--	17	3	3.46	1.50	--	13
	2	4.63	1.89	--	30	3	4.32	1.42	--	19	4	4.60	1.56	--	10
	3	4.53	1.64	--	36	4	4.83	1.21	--	24	5	4.29	1.58	--	14
	4	4.56	1.22	--	32	5	3.71	1.36	--	17	6	4.18	1.62	--	17
	5	4.38	1.75	--	39	6	3.81	1.50	--	21	7	4.07	1.39	--	15
	6	4.67	1.42	--	30	7	4.50	1.74	--	28	--	--	--	--	--

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs
* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.005$

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Table 6. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Mathematics Subtest for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Year, by Grade, & by Program

GROUP Program	Year 1					Year 2					Year 3				
	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST Afterschool	--	--	--	--	--	3	5.44	1.83	1.78*	9	4	4.50	1.26	-0.13	6
	--	--	--	--	--	4	5.00	1.00	0.39	10	5	5.63	0.70	2.26*	8
Dance Group	--	--	--	--	--	2	5.50	1.89	1.71	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	3	6.33	2.13	2.68*	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	4	5.83	1.77	1.65	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	5	4.00	1.20	0.49	7	--	--	--	--	--
Literacy Class	1	5.64	2.23	-0.35	11	2	3.91	1.56	0.66	11	3	4.67	0.47	1.35	3
	2	5.00	2.12	0.22	4	3	5.20	1.33	0.70	5	--	--	--	--	--
	3	5.71	0.88	1.53	7	4	5.63	1.11	1.16	8	5	5.00	0.00	0.00	2
	4	4.43	1.18	-0.25	7	5	3.60	1.02	0.64	5	--	--	--	--	--
	5	4.80	1.83	0.84	5	6	6.00	1.63	0.94	3	--	--	--	--	--
	6	4.00	0.00	-0.83	2	7	3.50	0.50	-0.82	2	--	--	--	--	--
Newstart	--	--	--	--	--	1	4.33	1.89	-1.20	3	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	2	4.32	1.69	1.87*	19	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	3	4.71	1.16	0.65	7	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	4	4.21	0.77	-1.71*	14	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	5	3.63	1.65	-0.15	16	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	6	3.80	1.47	-0.01	5	--	--	--	--	--

Table 6. (Continued)

GROUP Program	Year 1					Year 2					Year 3				
	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
Saturday School	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	4.80	1.76	-2.39*	15
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	2.86	2.70	-0.65	7
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	4.80	1.17	0.32	10
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5.55	1.62	1.96*	11
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6	4.33	1.37	0.20	6
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	5.67	1.70	1.77*	3
Table Tennis	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	5.80	0.75	2.03*	5
Turning Point	--	--	--	--	--	6	5.00	0.94	2.19*	9	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	7	5.33	2.05	0.77	3	--	--	--	--	--
Viking Center	--	--	--	--	--	2	4.50	1.98	0.52	6	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	3	4.50	1.80	0.22	4	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	4	4.00	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	5	2.67	1.25	-1.23	3	--	--	--	--	--
Non-FIRST	--	--	--	--	--	1	5.00	1.51	--	35	2	6.44	2.11	--	18
	1	5.95	1.43	--	21	2	4.06	1.73	--	17	3	3.46	1.50	--	13
	2	4.63	1.89	--	30	3	4.32	1.42	--	19	4	4.60	1.56	--	10
	3	4.53	1.64	--	36	4	4.83	1.21	--	24	5	4.29	1.58	--	14
	4	4.56	1.22	--	32	5	3.71	1.36	--	17	6	4.18	1.62	--	17
	5	4.38	1.75	--	39	6	3.81	1.50	--	21	7	4.07	1.39	--	15
	6	4.67	1.42	--	30	7	4.50	1.74	--	28	--	--	--	--	--

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs
$p < 0.05$

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Table 7. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Reading Subtest for FIRST Students by Program & by Grade from Years 1 to 2 & 2 to 3

Program	Year 1 - Year 2		Year 2 - Year 3	
	Grade in Year 2	t*	Grade in Year 3	t*
Afterschool	3	2.42*	4	1.07
	4	-0.06	5	1.43
Dance Group	2	-1.12	3	-0.38
	3	0.61	4	-1.57
	4	-3.58**	5	1.10
	5	0.17	6	0.15
Literacy Class	2	-2.31*	3	-0.79
	3	0.23	–	–
	4	-1.03	5	0.57
	5	0.65	–	–
	6	-0.63	–	–
	7	0.89	–	–
Newstart	2	-2.99**	3	-0.91
	3	0.19	4	-1.07
	4	-0.96	5	2.16*
	5	-1.54	6	-0.13
	6	-0.91	7	1.16
Saturday School	–	–	2	-1.93*
	–	–	3	0.30
	–	–	4	-0.70
	–	–	5	0.59
	–	–	6	-0.83
	–	–	7	0.34
Table Tennis	–	–	5	1.58

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Table 7. (Continued)

Program	Year 1 - Year 2		Year 2 - Year 3	
	Grade in Year 2	t^*	Grade in Year 3	t^*
Turning Point	6	-0.22	7	0.87
	7	1.90	--	--
Viking Center	2	-2.58*	3	-0.42
	3	0.40	4	-0.20
	4	--	5	--
	5	-1.21	6	--

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants across years
* $p < 0.05$
\- $p < 0.005$

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Table 8. Results of Iowa Test of Basic Skills Mathematics Subtest for FIRST Students by Program & by Grade from Years 1 to 2 & 2 to 3

Program	Year 1 - Year 2		Year 2 - Year 3	
	Grade in Year 2	t*	Grade in Year 3	t*
Afterschool	3	-0.50	4	-1.09
	4	-1.58	5	1.51
Dance Group	2	-0.46	3	0.41
	3	-0.60	4	-1.01
	4	-0.39	5	0.79
	5	-1.56	6	0.21
Literacy Class	2	-2.11*	3	0.81
	3	0.17	--	--
	4	-0.15	5	-0.77
	5	-0.95	--	--
	6	1.03	--	--
	7	-1.41	--	--
Newstart	2	-1.87*	3	-1.07
	3	-2.92**	4	0.83
	4	-1.38	5	0.32
	5	-2.87**	6	-0.17
	6	-0.56	7	0.16
Saturday School	--	--	2	0.21
	--	--	3	-0.35
	--	--	4	-1.03
	--	--	5	-0.04
	--	--	6	-0.33
	--	--	7	0.33
Table Tennis	--	--	5	0.71

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Table 8. (Continued)

Program	Year 1 - Year 2		Year 2 - Year 3	
	Grade in Year 2	t*	Grade in Year 3	t*
Turning Point	6	-0.61	7	1.26
	7	0.26	–	–
Viking Center	2	-2.00*	3	-1.57
	3	-1.77	4	-0.39
	4	–	5	–
	5	-1.89	6	–

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants across years
* $p < 0.05$
\- $p < 0.01$
– $p < 0.005$

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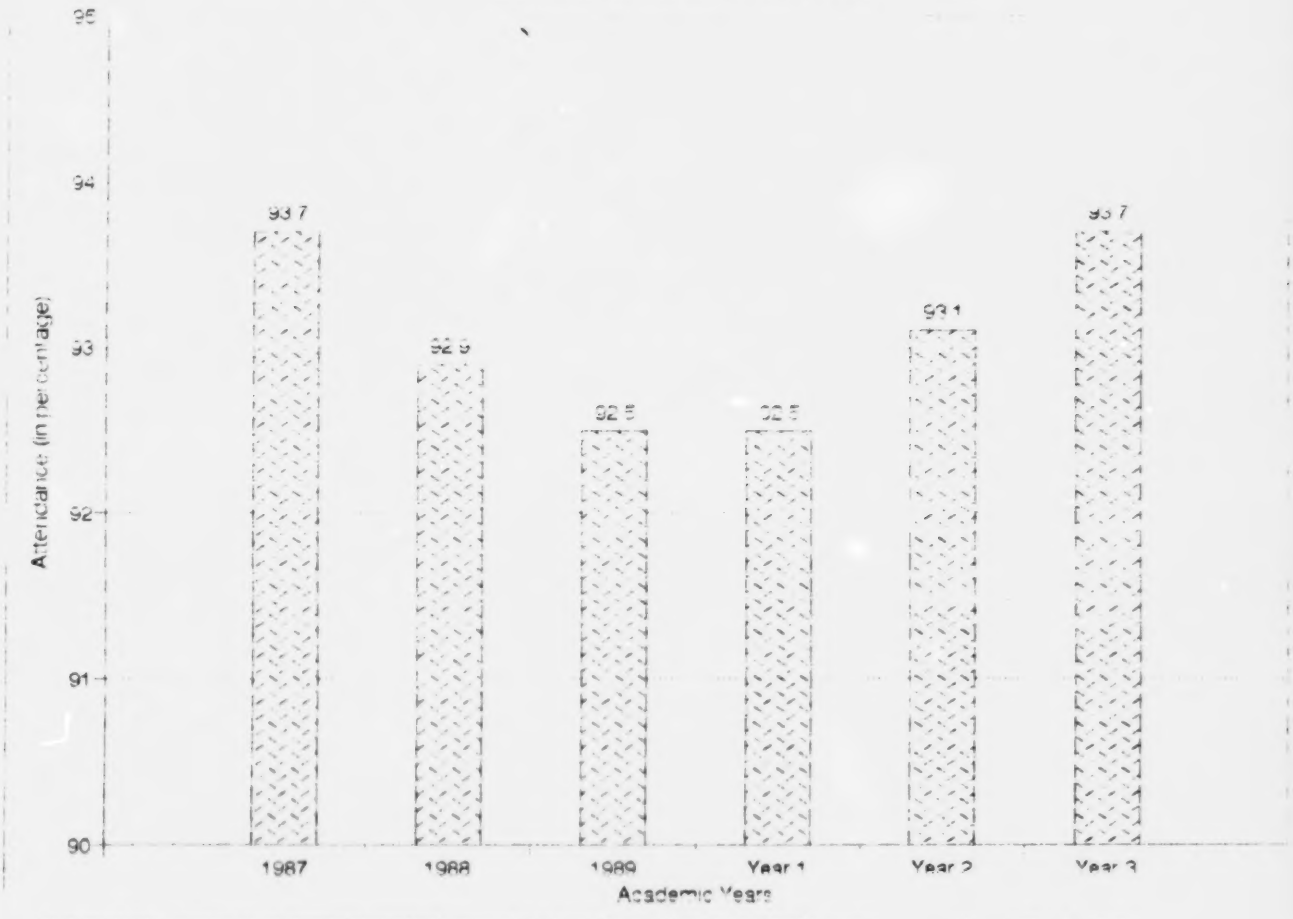
program, significant gains in reading achievement when compared with scores the previous year were demonstrated for third grade boys in the Afterschool program during Year Two and for fifth grade Newstart children in Year Three, the year following the project. Perhaps this indicates that Newstart made a change in their behavior which carried over into their classroom work the following year. Unfortunately, there were also several significant declines in achievement test scores: second graders in the Saturday School program in reading, second graders in both the Viking Center and Newstart in both reading and mathematics, fourth graders in the Dance Group in reading, and third and fifth graders in Newstart in mathematics.

This pattern of scattered significant positive differences by grade between participants in individual FIRST programs and non-participants supports the conclusion that FIRST was partially successful in increasing the Blalock students' achievement in reading and mathematics. It is important to note that the numbers of students participating in the FIRST programs is often small, especially when broken down by grade, program, and year. In addition, the comparison group (students who did not participate in any of the specific FIRST programs) may actually have been affected by FIRST. They were in the school and classes during the three years of the project so any effect on teachers, administrators, overall instructional program, and school atmosphere affected them as much as it did the FIRST participants. In no sense is this comparison group a control group.

Objective 2: To increase student attendance. Figure 1 presents the attendance data for the school over the three years of the project as well as for several prior years. Attendance increased across the years of the project from 92.5% in Year One to 93.7% in Year Three. The attendance incentive program implemented as a part of Blalock FIRST appears to have been effective. The school is now approaching the system average of 94.1%.

Figure 1. Attendance data for Blalock Elementary School, 1987-1992



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Objective 3: To reduce the number of students who are retained and/or placed in remedial programs (Chapter 1 and REP). Table 9 presents these data. Actual enrollment at the school dropped due to changes in the public housing project. Therefore, retention data are given as a percentage of enrollment and show an over-all decline from 7% to 3%. Review of the percentage of children retained indicates that over the three years prior to Blalock FIRST, retention increased and then began to decrease (see Figure 2). This trend continued through Year Two of the project with a slight increase in the percentage of students retained at the end of Year Three, although the actual number of students retained differed only by one pupil. The efforts of Blalock FIRST coincided with a school system attempt to lower pupil retention and appear to have been effective.

Information on the students placed in remedial reading and mathematics programs (Chapter I and REP) is presented in Table 10. Unfortunately, Blalock FIRST seems to have been unsuccessful in reducing these numbers. In fact, the percentage of children enrolled actually increased across the three years of the project.

Objective 4: To improve the student's self-esteem. Students in Blalock FIRST were given the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Test in Years Two and Three of the project. Table 11 gives the results by year and by program across grades. There were no significant differences for any program in any of the three years. Table 12 presents the same data by grade level and by year across programs. There was a significant increase in self-esteem for students in FIRST programs, when compared with students not participating in Blalock FIRST, in Year Two at grade 4, but not in any other comparison. However, as seen in Table 13, there were significant differences in self-esteem scores for children of parents who attended the Family Literacy Class compared with children whose parents did not participate. These differences are found in Year Two at grades 4 and 6, and in Year Three at grades 4, 5, and 7. Although the Family Literacy Class had

Table 9. Retention Data based on Enrollment for Blalock Elementary School, 1987-1992

Academic Years	Retention		Total Enrollment
	Number of Students	%	
1986-1987	35	7.19	487
1987-1988	73	15.21	480
1988-1989	41	9.00	456
1989-1990	24	5.72	419
1990-1991	11	2.76	399
1991-1992	12	3.41	352

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Figure 2 Progression/Retention Data for
Blalock Elementary School, 1987-1992

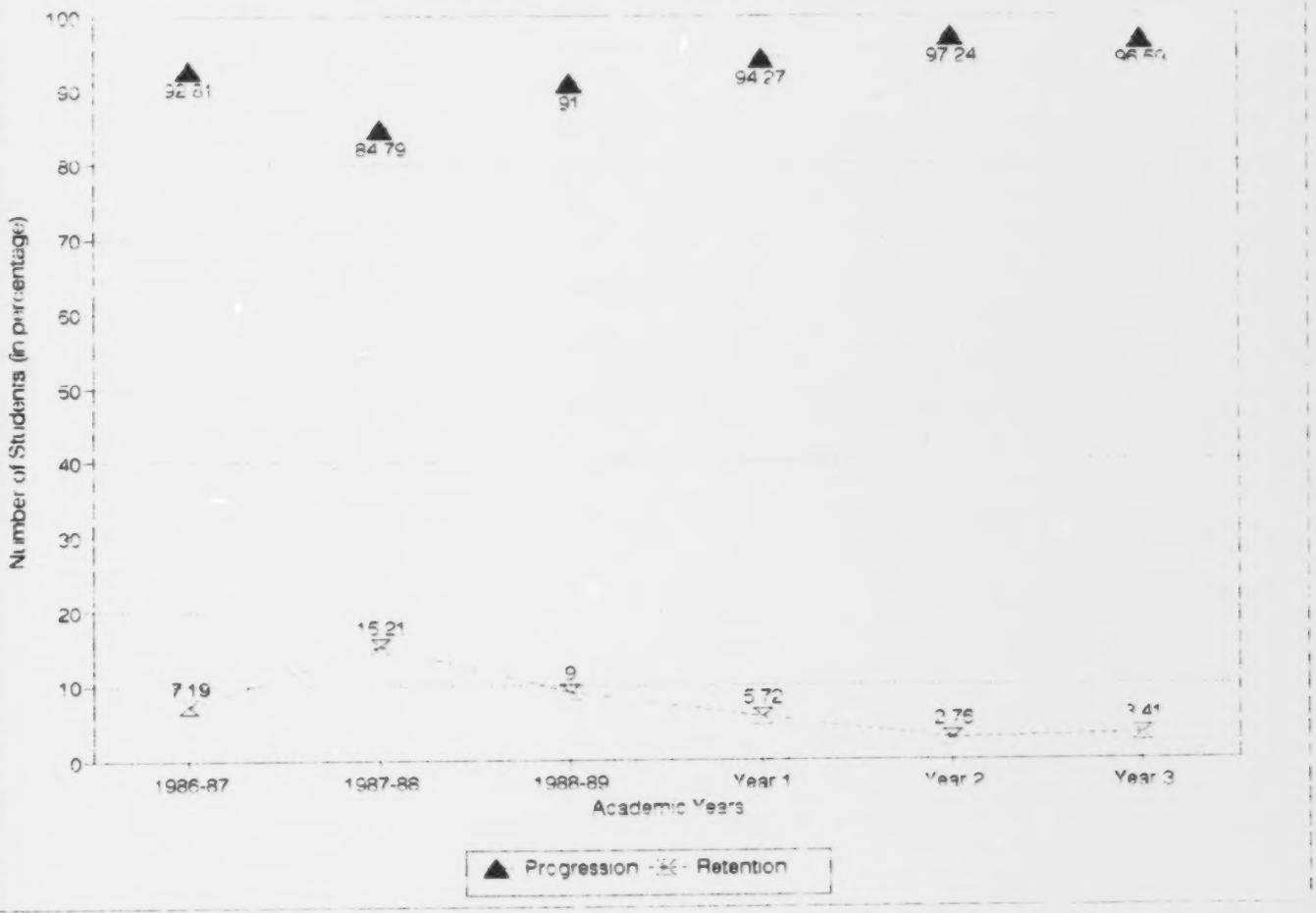

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Table 10. Remedial Placement Data for Blalock Elementary School, 1987-1992

Academic Years	Reading				Mathematics			
	Chapter I		REP		Chapter I		REP	
	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%
1986-1987	77	15.81	0	0.00	57	11.70	0	0.00
1987-1988	90	18.75	74	15.42	46	9.58	26	5.42
1988-1989	52	11.40	88	19.30	27	5.92	69	15.13
1989-1990	88	21.00	62	14.80	30	7.16	46	10.98
1990-1991	95	23.81	59	14.79	54	13.53	36	9.02
1991-1992	100	28.41	59	16.76	85	24.15	49	13.92

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Table 11. Results of Piers-Harris for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Year & by Program across Grades

GROUP Program	Year 2				Year 3			
	Mean	SD	t*	n	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST Afterschool	77.10	9.94	0.61	10	78.55	11.00	0.91	11
Dance Group	79.00	7.47	1.08	10	–	–	–	–
Literacy Class	75.53	12.55	0.29	15	77.21	11.31	0.67	14
Newstart	72.12	12.29	-0.81	26	–	–	–	–
Saturday School	–	–	–	–	77.36	10.27	1.03	33
Table Tennis	–	–	–	–	78.83	11.20	0.79	6
Turning Point	75.36	6.50	0.22	11	–	–	–	–
Viking Center	74.20	10.34	-0.05	5	–	–	–	–
Non-FIRST students	74.48	13.04	–	77	74.59	13.56	–	63

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs

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Table 12. Results of Piers-Harris for FIRST Students and Non-FIRST Students by Grade & by Year across Programs

Group	Year 2					Year 3				
	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST	2	–	–	–	–	3	70.62	10.81	-0.08	13
	3	75.05	11.42	0.58	19	4	81.88	10.07	1.30	17
	4	75.86	13.93	1.83*	21	5	78.90	8.21	1.58	21
	5	72.42	12.25	0.47	19	6	74.10	12.60	0.23	20
	6	76.00	4.87	-0.06	14	7	78.82	7.64	-0.88	11
	7	74.33	8.12	-1.29	6	–	–	–	–	–
Non-FIRST	1	–	–	–	–	2	86.00	2.00	–	2
	2	–	–	–	–	3	71.07	18.82	–	15
	3	72.47	14.38	–	15	4	76.00	12.61	–	9
	4	70.44	12.66	–	16	5	73.13	10.26	–	8
	5	70.44	12.78	–	16	6	73.17	12.06	–	18
	6	76.07	11.52	–	15	7	81.36	5.82	–	11
	7	81.35	12.31	–	17	–	–	–	–	–

a one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs

* $p < 0.05$

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Table 13. Results of Piers-Harris for FIRST and Non-FIRST Students by Program, by Grade, & by Year

GROUP Program	Year 2					Year 3				
	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST Afterschool	3	76.00	13.89	0.54	7	4	80.83	11.57	0.75	6
	4	73.57	9.72	0.58	7	5	79.13	10.03	1.18	8
	5	78.00	--	--	1	6	78.00	--	--	1
Dance Group	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	3	78.67	4.50	0.72	3	--	--	--	--	--
	4	82.67	5.31	1.62	3	--	--	--	--	--
	5	76.40	8.33	0.97	5	--	--	--	--	--
Literacy Class	2	--	--	--	--	3	68.00	5.35	0.20	3
	3	74.67	13.47	1.03	3	4	90.33	3.30	1.89*	3
	4	81.67	11.18	2.81**	6	5	81.43	5.53	1.91*	7
	5	72.20	12.32	0.27	5	6	75.00	15.46	0.30	6
	6	75.50	2.50	8.39***	2	7	79.00	1.00	4.27***	2
	7	65.00	0.00	--	1	--	--	--	--	--
Newstart	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	3	83.00	2.94	1.23	3	--	--	--	--	--
	4	69.71	14.47	-0.12	7	--	--	--	--	--
	5	68.33	12.58	-0.44	12	--	--	--	--	--
	6	77.20	1.83	0.21	5	--	--	--	--	--
Saturday School	--	--	--	--	--	2	75.67	11.84	-1.16	3
	--	--	--	--	--	3	70.75	11.37	-0.03	4
	--	--	--	--	--	4	83.57	10.24	1.54	7
	--	--	--	--	--	5	79.25	7.65	1.53	12
	--	--	--	--	--	6	72.60	10.58	-0.10	5
	--	--	--	--	--	7	78.00	5.72	-0.89	3
Table Tennis	--	--	--	--	--	4	86.00	--	--	1
	--	--	--	--	--	5	78.75	12.15	0.84	4

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Table 13. (Continued)

GROUP Program	Year 2					Year 3				
	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n	Grade	Mean	SD	t*	n
Turning Point	6	75.38	6.16	-0.16	8	–	–	–	–	–
	7	75.33	7.32	0.81	3	–	–	–	–	–
Viking Center	2	73.00	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
	3	80.33	8.22	0.90	3	–	–	–	–	–
	4	70.00	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
	5	60.00	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Non-FIRST	–	–	–	–	–	2	86.00	2.00	–	2
	–	–	–	–	–	3	71.07	18.82	–	15
	3	72.47	14.38	–	15	4	76.00	12.61	–	9
	4	70.44	12.66	–	16	5	73.13	10.26	–	8
	5	70.44	12.78	–	16	6	73.17	12.06	–	18
	6	76.07	11.52	–	15	7	81.36	5.82	–	11
	7	81.35	12.31	–	17	–	–	–	–	–

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs

. $p < 0.05$

– $p < 0.01$

— $p < 0.005$

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only an indirect effect on the children, it appears that mothers gained enough self-confidence and parenting skills to positively influence their children's concept of themselves. There were no significant gains within the Blalock FIRST group on self-esteem across grades and programs. However, looking at grades and programs separately, fourth graders who had participated in the Saturday School in Year Two and fifth graders who participated in Table Tennis in Year Three showed a significant gain in their self-esteem scores from Year Two to Year Three (see Table 14).

Objective 5: To increase teacher expectations for student achievement. Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire on their expectations for students each year. This objective was not fully implemented. Teachers completed the questionnaire only in Year Two, and several CISS projects resulted. As noted above, teachers felt students and parents, not teacher expectations or instruction, were responsible for low achievement.

Objective 6: To implement the Classroom Improvement Support System project (CISS) in classrooms. Only a few teachers agreed to implement full CISS projects, although those who did so felt that the projects improved achievement in their classes. Several other teachers participated as grade-level teams in short-term CISS projects. Because so few teachers implemented CISS projects, the Blalock FIRST staff implemented several projects school-wide or for selected groups of students. Examples include the Viking Center and Newstart. Results of these projects on student achievement and self-concept are given in Table 15. There were no differences in the reading, mathematics, or self-esteem scores between children who participated in the Viking Center and those who did not. Students in Grade 2 who participated in Newstart had significantly higher mathematics scores, but those in Grade 4 had significantly lower mathematics and reading scores than did children at that grade level who did not participate in

Table 14. Results of Piers-Harris for FIRST Students by Program & by Grade from Years 2 to 3

Program	Year 2 - Year 3	
	Grade in Year 3	t*
Afterschool	4	0.67
	5	1.09
Dance Group	4	-0.11
	5	0.44
	6	-0.60
Literacy Class	4	0.79
Newstart	4	1.49
	5	1.62
	6	1.18
	7	-0.62
Saturday School	4	2.43*
	5	0.53
	6	-0.29
	7	1.03
Table Tennis	5	2.01*
Turning Point	7	1.54
Viking Center	4	0.24

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants across years
$p < 0.05$

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Table 15. Results of ITBS & Piers-Harris for Viking Center & Newstart Students Compared with Non-FIRST Students by Grade in Year 2

GROUP Program	Grade	Reading				Mathematics				Self-Esteem			
		Mean	SD	t*	n	Mean	SD	t*	n	Mean	SD	t*	n
FIRST Newstart	1	4.67	2.87	-0.29	3	4.33	1.89	-1.20	3	–	–	–	–
	2	3.45	1.40	-0.96	20	4.32	1.69	1.87'	19	66.71	10.66	-1.24	7
	3	4.86	0.83	0.63	7	4.71	1.16	0.65	7	83.00	2.94	1.23	3
	4	3.31	1.14	-3.40"	13	4.21	0.77	-1.71'	14	69.71	14.47	-0.12	7
	5	3.25	1.35	-1.27	16	3.63	1.65	-0.15	16	68.33	12.58	-0.44	12
	6	3.40	1.02	-0.44	5	3.80	1.47	-0.01	5	77.20	1.83	0.21	5
Viking Center	2	3.00	1.29	-0.96	6	4.50	1.98	0.52	6	–	–	–	–
	3	4.50	1.12	0.04	4	4.50	1.80	0.22	4	80.33	8.22	0.90	3
	4	2.00	–	–	1	4.00	–	–	1	70.00	–	–	1
	5	3.33	1.25	-0.60	3	2.67	1.25	-1.23	3	60.00	–	–	1
Non-FIRST	1	4.94	1.41	–	36	5.00	1.51	–	35	–	–	–	–
	2	3.59	1.29	–	17	4.06	1.73	–	17	–	–	–	–
	3	4.47	1.53	–	19	4.32	1.42	–	19	72.47	14.38	–	15
	4	4.60	1.10	–	25	4.83	1.21	–	24	70.44	12.66	–	16
	5	3.88	1.49	–	17	3.71	1.36	–	17	70.44	12.78	–	16
	6	3.68	1.33	–	22	3.81	1.50	–	21	76.07	11.52	–	15
	7	4.63	1.36	–	27	4.50	1.74	–	28	81.35	12.31	–	17

* one tailed t-tests comparing FIRST program participants with students not participating in any FIRST programs
' $p < 0.05$
" $p < 0.005$

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Newstart. There were no differences in self-esteem scores between children who did and did not participate in Newstart.

Objective 7: To increase the involvement and cooperation of the students' families. The year prior to implementation of the project, no families participated in the PTA, and there were very few opportunities for parents to interact with the teachers except in a confrontation over their children's achievement--or lack of it. During Blalock FIRST, parents became involved in many programs. For example:

- 12 parents contributed to the publication Muted Cries,
- 4 parents participated in school assemblies as speakers,
- 6 parents planned and hosted a variety of school receptions,
- 5 parents conducted or served as panel members in workshops,
- 5 parents participated in a community play,
- 8 parents became employed in the school,
- 4 parents contributed to the newsletter,
- 13 parents volunteered on more than one occasion in the school.

This participation was the direct result of Blalock FIRST, especially the Family Literacy Class and the workshops held for parents. In addition, the PTA became fully functional with an active slate of officers who planned PTA activities for Blalock School and participated in city-wide PTA events.

Objective 8: To increase community support for and involvement in school activities. The Bankhead Courts Interagency Council had been formed before Blalock FIRST began. However, the school was not involved in its activities nor were the agencies involved in the school. By the end of Year Three, a substantial number of community agencies co-sponsored workshops with the school and participated jointly in several school events (see Appendix B,

Objective 8). The community now sees the school as an integral part of the community and vice versa.

Narrative Evaluation of the Project

Several initiatives begun by Blalock FIRST have now been incorporated into the school's ongoing program; others have been adopted at the system level. These include:

- A school and system-wide objective to improve attendance.
- A diagnostic pretest inventory for students at all grade levels at the beginning of the year in the areas of reading and mathematics.
- Frequency counts on the number of students who are sent to the office and the types of behaviors these children exhibit.
- Referral of students exhibiting chronic, disruptive behavior to the Blalock Student Support Team (SST).
- Identification of physical space to provide a neutral environment for children who may be in need of temporary intervention to diffuse potentially more serious situations.
- Formation of a school discipline committee to which students in need of alternative approaches are referred.
- Establishment of a system-wide parenting and resource center.
- Establishment of a PALS Laboratory at the satellite Atlanta-Fulton County Library in the community.
- A commitment to hire supportive, qualified parents for school positions such as aides.
- Increased cooperation among housing management, crime prevention, and the school in school attendance and parental responsibility for children.

In exit interviews, teachers and administrators shared that Blalock FIRST did indeed serve as a catalyst for many changes in the school. The CISS initiatives were seeds for instructional change not only at the school level, but throughout the Atlanta Public Schools. Despite the initial unhappiness of teachers having to change teaching assignments, as recommended by Blalock FIRST staff at the end of Year Two, the principal attributed an increase in test scores in

certain classes, in part, to the change as well as to the impact of Blalock FIRST over the past three years.

There has been an increase in awareness, interest, cooperation, and level of support in school activities on the part of the larger community, parents, students, and teachers. This observation is based on the number of community leaders visiting the school, participants in FIRST programs, news articles and other media coverage of FIRST activities, people volunteering in FIRST programs, different community agencies working jointly with FIRST on projects, participants in workshops, and FIRST initiatives. The Afterschool Program, Saturday School, Family Literacy Class, and the increased interest in science, mathematics, and whole language are all legacies of Blalock FIRST. Communication has improved--teachers have begun talking to other teachers; the administration is setting a more deliberate tone in making instructional changes in the school; and parents are taking greater responsibilities in the school and with their children. The influence of the Blalock FIRST program has been felt throughout the community.

Unfortunately, the impact of Blalock FIRST was not seen across the board in significant academic growth as measured by the standardized achievement test in reading and mathematics. There was some growth, at least partially attributable to FIRST, but many students' scores did not change or decreased. In many instances, too few children participated in a specific Blalock FIRST program for differences to be seen. Also test scores were not available on all those who did participate. However, after a review of the 1991-1992 standardized test scores, the school's instructional lead teacher reports that 15 children scored above the 90th percentile in reading. This is unique in the school's test scores. The majority of these children were in the first through third grades with several children being in the second grade. At least a third of these students had either parents or older siblings who had participated in FIRST programs over the past three

years. Also, the bulk of these second grade children were students of one of the teachers who was reassigned as a result of recommendations made by FIRST staff.

It is also unfortunate that the CISS project was never fully implemented. Teacher resistance kept the staff from organizing a project in each classroom. It had been hoped that the CISS initiatives would have been a major vehicle for instructional change, altered teacher expectations of students, and academic achievement of the students. In spite of the resistance on the part of many teachers, a few did plan and implement CISS projects and found them to be very helpful. Perhaps it was unreasonable to expect across the board participation and change. A more reasonable expectation might have been limited participation and excitement at the small changes that did occur. When the Blalock staff instituted student instructional programs, teachers eventually "came around" to inquire, observe, and even participate. They were most positive in their assessment of the effect of Newstart on creating a climate for a successful Field Day. Thus, there were some attitudinal and instructional changes observed.

Perhaps the greatest effect of Blalock FIRST was on the parents who participated consistently over the three years of the project. Many of them changed from negative, school adversaries to positive, school supporters. In learning positive ways to interact with the school personnel, these parents opened doors for volunteer and paid participation in the school program. They also became more effective parents and exerted a positive influence on their children. This change in school atmosphere was dramatic and appears to be long-lasting. In the long term, it should also improve student achievement and decrease school drop-outs. If so, Blalock FIRST can be judged a success.

Dissemination of Project Results

Throughout the three years of the project many presentations were made at professional conferences. A list of these speeches, workshops, and papers is given in Appendix C. Two

articles have been prepared and submitted to ERIC for publication, and others are planned for submission to professional journals. The project has also been noted in the local Atlanta press and the videotape produced by the drama group was shown on local public television. In addition, a volume of writing by the participants in the Family Literacy Class has been published privately. All of these are listed in Appendix C.

The project results have had wide informal dissemination through word-of-mouth within the Atlanta Public Schools and the metropolitan Atlanta educational community. Several of the ideas have been presented to President Jimmy Carter's Atlanta Project for implementation by the communities it serves. Thus, the formal dissemination of results underestimates the impact Blalock FIRST has had on the Atlanta metropolitan community.

Summary & Impact of Project

Blalock FIRST achieved three of its eight objectives, partially achieved four others, and failed to achieve one. Many initiatives were implemented, and many have continued into the following school year. Informal feedback from the community, school administration, teachers, parents, and students all points to a positive impact of the project on changing the school climate and the school-community cooperation. Both the school and the school system have adopted several of Blalock FIRST's initiatives, thus further institutionalizing the program. Certainly, there is still poverty and crime in the Bankhead Courts community. However, as a result of Blalock FIRST, there is a greater sense of positive cooperation among the residents, community agencies, and the school. This cooperation can only create a positive climate for children's learning and behavior in the coming years.

Appendix A

Description of Blalock FIRST Programs

Afterschool Program

Boys in grades 3 through 7 were invited to participate in an afterschool program whose objectives were to increase their self-esteem and to improve their academic performance. The program was held four days a week, Mondays through Thursdays, from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m. As many as thirty-five boys attended on some days; the average attendance was about twenty.

Upon arrival, the boys were required to do their homework for approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. If they did not have homework or when they finished, they engaged in individual reading. They could bring a book or they could select one of the many books in the Family Resource Room. Also available were instructional games applying mathematics, reading, and language skills; and atheletic equipment (weights, jump ropes, tumbling mats, and a rowing machine).

Following their homework period, they were taught poetry and public speaking using a "soap box." The boys were given specific topics that they were asked to speak on for three or four minutes. Sometimes they were given unfamiliar topics to research before speaking. Poems memorized were ones regarding self-esteem and motivation, such as "Invictus" by William Foster and "Principles of Life" by Marcus Garvey.

Another goal was character building. As the boys entered the room they were required to find an adult and greet him or her. Following the greeting, the boys were expected to find their seats, put their books away, get out their homework, and begin work or to read.

As the year unfolded, the boys became interested in building garden boxes for the joint Blalock FIRST/Families in Action garden project. It was felt that this would be a good project for cooperative teamwork and to apply mathematics, science, reading, writing, oral communication, and problem-solving skills. Observing, recording, and measuring were required. The boys made blueprints and templates to scale, and then worked with the actual materials. For many, this was the first time that they had had access to hand or power tools. They were taught safety and how to use tools properly. They were cautioned about the consequences of improper use of the tools. The school year ended without any injuries! The boys had internalized the fact that it was important to apply rules of safety.

When the garden boxes were completed, they planted vegetables, including peas, cabbage, and beans. They put the garden boxes out into the courtyard of the school and were excited when, after a few days, young plants had begun to break through. The boys made a recording of what was growing and under what conditions. At the conclusion of the year, no vegetables had appeared, but the plants had grown to a height of several inches. The boys took their garden boxes home to tend over the summer.

The program itself enabled the boys to interact together as teams and to share some positive experiences with other males. The highlight of the first year of the Afterschool program was a trip for the boys who had improved in their grades to a restaurant in the West End section

of Atlanta. The boys were on their best behavior, having practiced good restaurant etiquette and behavior. Other patrons in the restaurant were very complimentary of the boys' behavior. Of further note, a prominent local figure was introduced to the boys; they recited "Invictus", which was well received.

The Afterschool Program caused a few unexpected problems with parents. The program was limited to boys in grades 3 through 7. Several parents raised the issue of why a similar program was not made available for girls. A second concern was why boys in grades K-2 were excluded. As a result the Dance Program was begun for girls and younger boys were allowed to attend the Afterschool Program in Year Three. The format and activities in Year Three were essentially the same as in Year Two. The boys began to build a clubhouse near the Recreation Center, using skills learned in building their garden boxes.

Appreciation Events

In order to build self-esteem and to reward participation in Blalock FIRST programs and desired behaviors both at the school and in the community, several appreciation events were planned each year. Three examples and a detailed description of one of the events are given below:

Teacher Appreciation

- Refreshments in the teacher's lounge several times per month.
- Mugs with the motto, "The Blalock Family is FIRST in Caring, Commitment, Competency, Change."
- Gift baskets.
- Pins.

Parent Appreciation

- Mother/Daughter Tea for participants in the Dance Group.
- Mother/Son Banquet for participants in the Afterschool Program.

Mother/Daughter Appreciation Tea

An appreciation tea was planned at the end of Year Two for the mothers and girls who had participated in the Dance Group. It was designed to:

- acknowledge girls and mothers who had participated in the dance troupe,
- involve mothers in the development of their daughters by having them serve as planners, hostesses, and mistress of ceremony for the program,
- increase the confidence of parents in their writing, leadership, and cooperative interpersonal skills,

- demonstrate the parents' ability to perform in front of a group by having them read their original essay,

- model behaviors for students and parents, by inviting the many females in the community who provide a service to say thank you for their continued work and support,

- further provide an opportunity for personnel from the school and the community to work cooperatively.

Throughout the year it had been observed that groups of individuals in the community felt that their contributions had gone unnoticed and unappreciated. Teachers also commented that the parents and children did not show signs of appreciation for the efforts they made to work with their children. This was echoed by parents in reference to efforts they made to volunteer within the school.

The idea of an Appreciation Tea was to demonstrate how each segment of the community was willing to cooperate and had already provided vital services throughout the year. The media specialist at the satellite public library, adjacent to the school, was approached in early March as to whether or not she would be interested in a joint venture involving the school, families, and the community. Her response was enthusiastic as she saw the tea as an opportunity to advertise the services provided by the library system. The use of the branch library was offered. A second grade teacher was approached to assist with the invitations which were produced on her computer terminal. Mothers in the Family Literacy Program were then asked if they would like to participate. Those who did not have daughters as dancers were encouraged to submit writings to be read or to plan the tea. A kindergarten teacher donated floral arrangements as door prizes.

An essay, entitled "Thoughts on Mothering", was developed by parents to read at the tea. Mothers planned the tea -- decorations, refreshments, amounts to buy and prepare, and design and distribution of the invitations.

Eighty invitations were sent to dancers and their parents, the dance instructor, Blalock teachers and staff, personnel from the satellite branch of the Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library, Blalock FIRST staff, community members, participants in Turning Point, and service providers in the community.

Over forty people attended the affair including the school counselor; seven parents; three community members; and three Blalock FIRST staff personnel. No teachers from the school attended, however. The seven mothers who were present collectively represented twelve daughters.

This first experience in being responsible for an entire program revealed that there was a lot of insecurity and reluctance on the parents' part to initiate or be held responsible for things for fear that something would go wrong and someone else would get offended. Parents showed this insecurity by hinting that they might not be available the day before the activity; bickering over who would say what and who would make what presentation; missing practice or arriving

late; and pouting if one parent was perceived as receiving more information or leadership responsibility over another.

Factors contributing to the success of the activity included having a definite program; starting on time; using the script; having door prizes interspersed throughout the activity; having everything organized ahead of time; having parents write and read about their personal commitment; requiring participants to speak for not more than three minutes, and remaining within the time limit.

Attendance Incentive

One of the stated objectives for both the Blalock FIRST project and Blalock Elementary School was to increase the rate of daily attendance of students school-wide. To achieve this objective, an attendance initiative was implemented.

Attendance incentives organized each year of the project were:

Year One. Ice cream party for students with perfect attendance for the 30 days before standardized testing.

Year Two. Pizza party for students with perfect attendance 30 days prior to Field Day.

Year Three. An attendance buttons contest with a field trip on MARTA as the prize. The PTA sponsored a school-wide contest to determine a first, second, third, and fourth quarter winner in a design contest for a perfect attendance button. The winners of the contest were determined by the art teacher, a parent representative, school administrator, and business partner. Button designers and students with perfect attendance were rewarded with a field trip sponsored by MARTA, the transit system.

Classroom Improvement Support System (CISS)

The purpose of the CISS projects was to:

- assist teachers to implement alternative strategies of instruction in their classrooms.
- demonstrate alternative strategies that have proven effective in working with high risk students.
- coordinate resources in areas of interest that could be helpful in teacher's making changes in their classrooms.

During Year One, teachers had been asked to complete a CISS survey in which they were to self-assess their instruction and propose areas of change. This was unsuccessful as no surveys were returned. Teachers listened to presentations about CISS, but did not make proposals. As

a result of the Blalock FIRST activities in the school during Year One, teachers were aware of the Family Literacy Program and some changes in parent attitudes. It was hoped that they were now ready to participate fully in CISS.

During the planning week of Year Two of the project, the principal and Blalock FIRST staff met to plan for the upcoming year. The principal was enthusiastic and supportive of possible changes in the instructional program as a result of CISS, primarily because of the low test scores of the last decade that were associated with the school. As a result of initial attempts to implement CISS in Year One, all were aware that veteran teachers were overtly resistant to implications that changes were necessary and forthcoming. Of further concern was the fact that staff development sessions were attended but participants appeared bored and, upon subsequent classroom observations, there was little evidence of implementation.

Year Two CISS inventories (self-assessment of their classrooms and teaching strategies by teachers) were completed and indicated that the faculty felt that they were performing well with sufficient knowledge of subject matter. The teachers perceived themselves as competent and effective instructors. Most changes that needed to be made were perceived to originate outside themselves with children and parents.

Blalock FIRST staff presented to the school Leadership Team the findings of the teacher survey along with the results of the standardized test scores from the previous year and the results of a second grade inventory that had been developed by Blalock FIRST and administered in the beginning of the school year. Upon hearing the results, teachers expressed that they felt the consistently poor showing of the children on tests was influenced more by the chaotic home life and personal problems of many of the students than the educational experience being provided.

Teachers expressed that they could not teach in the manner that they would like because, not only were they feeling overworked, they were expected to adhere to a curriculum and pacing procedure that they felt was completely out of touch with the reality of their situation. Additionally, they were given the overwhelming task of teaching a population of children who, in large part, had little in the way of support systems at home. Teachers openly expressed that they felt the parents of the students, many who were former students of many of the same teachers, did not demonstrate interest in their children nor show appreciation for any efforts made by individuals who tried to help. They did not see CISS as a benefit in the present situation. Teachers were more motivated to develop projects by incentives for their classroom or their students than by a desire to change. Faculty were polled to determine interest in gaining staff development units (SDU's) for inservice training. No faculty was interested in developing a project for SDU credit.

One first grade teacher approached the Blalock FIRST Instructional Coordinator for assistance with her class. They developed the idea of short puppet presentations focusing on issues of responsibility, self-control, sharing, respect and discipline. After the FIRST Instructional Coordinator made two presentations that were well received, the project was abandoned by the teacher.

However, during Year Two, the FIRST Instructional Coordinator was successful in working with grade level groups of teachers to implement Reading Improvement Initiatives. These took the form of group CISS projects. They included:

- "Railing to Read." This was a school-wide effort to improve home reading among children and parents. It was designed to increase reading skills by increasing the number of books read, and by increasing parent participation through home reading. Materials included library books and printed materials donated by a variety of organizations. Contracts for the number of books to be read, trips to the library, and daily family story reading times were developed for parents and children. MARTA, the transit system, and Blalock FIRST provided incentives to classes (name tags, bulletin board displays, popcorn parties, certificates). An 8'x 8' map identifying MARTA stations was donated to spark enthusiasm and chart progress of each class.

- Vocabulary. This second grade reading initiative provided an alternate approach to learning vocabulary words. Students produced and performed a play for parents and learned to read and use new vocabulary for this purpose.

- School Store. The third and fourth graders obtained hands-on reading and mathematics experience by operating a school supply store. They ordered materials and sold them to other students. Completion of assigned work in the classroom was the criterion for participating in the school store.

- Classroom newspaper. The fifth grade reading initiative was to increase reading skills by the creation of a classroom newspaper. Students wrote and published a newspaper.

- Children's Classics. The Remedial Education Program (REP) initiative required students to read a specific number of books each quarter including selections from books identified as classics in children's literature. Ten books per quarter were required reading of which two had to be selected from a list of classics. Children were asked to write weekly on a specific topic. Writings were compiled into an anthology of poems, prose, and short stories. Parents were asked to encourage children to read daily.

- Counselor's Celebrity Readers. This program provided opportunities for fourth graders involved in the counseling program to improve their reading skills by reading to kindergarten children on a weekly basis. Students selected a book or short reading selection, rehearsed with the counselor during early part of the week and read to kindergartners on Thursday afternoons. Parents were asked to help children select books and listen to them read aloud. An ice cream party was held at the end of the year.

When it was apparent that only a few teachers would actually plan and implement individual CISS projects, Blalock FIRST staff developed and implemented several programs working directly with children (Viking Center, Newstart) It was hoped these would provide models for teacher change. Newstart was begun as a result of a CISS proposal from the physical

education teacher to better prepare the school for Field Day. The FIRST staff and this teacher worked together on the project.

In Year Three, the art teacher developed and implemented a CISS project, H.U.G.S. (Helping Us Grow Self-sufficient). It was a classroom management plan for all art classes, kindergarten to seventh grade. The goal was to encourage and support correct and appropriate classroom behavior in art, in order to increase learning. This goal was consistent with the school plan for school discipline.

Specific learning objectives were for students to:

- understand the classroom rules,
- follow the class rules and learn how to manage themselves appropriately,
- enjoy a better learning environment because they have learned self-control,
- learn that the consequence of being on task is a reward, either tangible or intangible.

The program operated throughout the entire school year. Materials needed were rewards for those children who received the most stamps for appropriate behavior, for example: a personalized tote bag, water color sets and paper, paperback book on an artist that is written for children, T-shirt decorating class, set of markers or colored pencils, diary making class, name stamp, and small weaving loom and yarn. Seating charts were developed and behavior was recorded daily. Parents were asked to help by reinforcing appropriate behaviors and by serving as volunteers to help monitor behaviors in the art room.

Another CISS project in Year Three was the fourth grade Dinosaur Project involving research, oral presentations, and a field trip to the dinosaur exhibit at the zoo. Students were required to develop questions about dinosaurs that they were interested in researching and to use the reference materials in the library as resources. Upon completing the research, students were asked to discuss their findings by making oral presentations in the class. A field trip to the exhibit at the zoo was the reward. Parents were asked to encourage their students to use a variety of references and to chaperon the field trip.

Focus on Family

A "Focus on Family" enrichment night program, led by a community volunteer, was implemented in Year Two. Activities centered around areas that would help families to work in a more supportive way and that would enrich the quality of family life. Dinner meetings were held several times per month at the school. The programs were motivational, providing encouragement for families to work cooperatively with one another and with the school and community.

Family Literacy Class

A Family Literacy Class was begun to help parents improve their own literacy and to learn skills needed to support their children's learning and homework. The class met from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. each Wednesday in the Blalock FIRST Family Resource Room. Following each class, the parents went to the school cafeteria to eat lunch together.

Many of the skills included in the class were taken from samples of children's homework brought in by the parents. They were taught what they needed to help their children with these assignments. Examples of these skills include grammar, comprehension, sentence structure, map skills, measurement, capitalization, fractions, subject-verb agreement, expository writing, paragraph writing, study skills. Test results were also reviewed with parents. Materials used included books, print, manipulatives, common household items, school memos, homework, and school forms. Strategies included small group and individual tutorial sessions, large group presentations, field trips, demonstrations, and guest lectures. Parents suggested many of the topics of interest for study.

Another goal of the Family Literacy Class was to help the parents learn appropriate school behaviors. They learned how to serve as volunteers in the school. They role-played parent-teacher conferences to learn to ask the questions they wanted to have answered and how to interact positively. This training on questioning techniques helped them learn how to ask questions without being confrontational.

A final goal was to increase the participants' self-esteem as women and as mothers. They were recognized on Valentine's Day and on Mother's Day when each mother was given a rose. They were encouraged to volunteer to share inspirational poems or readings with the group. They went on field trips to nearby businesses, community attractions, and theaters. They attended workshops involving local community leaders, artists, and politicians. They began to serve as volunteers in the school. They had discussions on various aspects of parenting, gaining new information and confidence in their role as mothers.

Family Resource Room

A Family Resource Room was set up in the basement of the school to house the Family Literacy Class and other Blalock FIRST programs. It was furnished with comfortable furniture donated by a local furniture warehouse; tables, chairs, and bookcases provided by the school; and kitchen appliances furnished by the Atlanta Housing Authority. It became a place parents and children congregated for informal discussion with the Blalock FIRST staff.

Gradually, both faculty and parents viewed the facility as a neutral place to meet and informally discuss concerns and interests that were both personal and school-related. This opportunity for sharing resulted in several interesting developments. The kindergarten teacher volunteered to conduct an after-school workshop for parents in flower arrangement. Parents were able to bring their children, and it became an opportunity for all involved to interact with school personnel in a different way. A parent, who had expressed an interest in sewing for others, talked with the curriculum specialist, who also sews. They shared some sewing tips. The parent was encouraged to bring in some of her work, and has gone on, not only to sew for a

number of the women in the community, but to make jewelry and have it displayed at several flea markets and shopping malls.

The non-threatening atmosphere of the Family Resource Room was a temporary respite for parents experiencing abusive situations; an informal counseling center for those who wanted advice or alternative childrearing strategies; a reception area for a number of family and school-related functions; and a rehearsal hall for parents involved in making transitions in their lives to practice new skills in writing, leadership, public speaking and acting.

The Family Resource Room was also used as a neutral site for difficult school-parent conferences and for community discussions when changes were proposed in the public housing project.

Girls' Dance Group

The dance group was formed to provide an opportunity for girls ages eight through fourteen to be involved in a four-week class in basic ballet and jazz. Formation of the dance group also provided parents an opportunity to take on leadership roles, assume responsibility for an activity from beginning to end, and interact with their daughters in a recreational pastime.

The purposes were for:

- participating girls to be able to define and demonstrate basic dance steps that had been presented during the class.
- participants to write descriptions of their experiences during this four-week class on a weekly basis.
- participants to perform before their parents as a culminating activity demonstrating the skills that had been presented over the four weeks.
- volunteer parents to be responsible and accountable for the group's meeting, activities, and performance.

Mothers in the Family Literacy class felt that a girls' group should be provided since the Afterschool Program was only for the boys. They also felt that there were many issues that the girls needed to have addressed since they would soon be at risk of becoming teenage mothers. They felt the girls needed involvement in more constructive activities and an opportunity to develop self-esteem.

Three parents volunteered, indicating that they would assist the instructor by holding practice at the school for one hour during the week if a class could be started. A student from a neighboring high school was approached to teach the classes for a four-week period on Saturday mornings. Parents made arrangements with the director of the neighborhood community center to allow for the classes to be held at that facility. Interested students were notified by a school announcement to meet with the parents who had volunteered to work with the group. At the first meeting, the students met the volunteer parents, received an overview

of the class, and were given information on when the classes would meet, the necessary permission slips, and the practice apparel required.

The volunteer parents were made responsible for keeping up with attendance both at the mid-week practice and Saturday class. These parents also were given the responsibility of rehearsing with the students, notifying them of any changes in practice, and communicating with the other parents regarding the girls' progress. Students were asked to fill out questionnaires regarding their impressions of the classes following each week. The mothers and students also practiced one hour during the week.

The program began with enthusiasm. It was explained to the girls that dancing was a discipline and an art form requiring practice, patience, punctuality, and establishment of a routine. After the first class, however, it became clear that the parents who volunteered to help had difficulty with not showing favoritism to their own children or relatives which caused hard feelings with other children and parents. Old feuds that had originated among parents in the community long before Blalock FIRST began resurfaced. The volunteer parents were perceived by some in the community as "thinking they were better," which discouraged one of the parents from continuing with the group on a regular basis.

As a consequence, several parents who had not originally volunteered, began to stop by and observe and act as side line coaches during the practices and Saturday classes, primarily to give their daughters the individual attention they observed daughters of the volunteers receiving. The instructor, a high school student, felt uncomfortable with four or five additional adults echoing her directions. Once this was brought to the attention of the adults, two of them ceased to participate in the Saturday class as did their daughters. The practice that took place during the week suffered equally from the adults not being able to share the responsibility of being in charge. Punctuality was a difficult behavior to establish with the adults, who lingered upstairs in the school talking to other parents before the start of each class.

By the end of the four weeks, the girls were not ready to perform, according to the instructor. She cited inconsistency in attendance among participants as the major reason. The girls were canvassed and wanted the classes to continue but the parent volunteers were finding it increasingly more difficult to arrive at practice on time during the week and on Saturday mornings. In spite of these problems, the classes continued several more weeks until other spring activities interfered further. Several of the dancers joined the girls in Turning Point to produce the play and video, Tribute to Women of Color.

Instructional Reproduction Center

Initially, it was suggested that teachers participate in making instructional games for potential staff-initiated learning centers. The teachers, however, were not interested in participating.

The project was reconfigured as a parent volunteer project, called the Instructional Reproduction Center. It was established to provide opportunities for parents to make educational games for the use of parents, children, and teachers. Open Monday through Friday,

8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., the Center was housed in the Family Resource Room and was equipped with work tables and basic art and office supplies.

Several strategies were used to promote the Center including announcements at both faculty and parent meetings; inserts in school-wide communiques with reference to the available services; canvassing teachers to determine what games they would like most to see produced; and demonstrations on how to construct the games during regular parent meetings. Thirty-four games were produced with the assistance of parents during the first month of the center's operation. Teachers requested games that addressed basic skills including alphabet recognition, common objects, consonants, blends, digraphs, sight vocabulary and mathematics facts.

Game cards were made out of 2" x 2" heavy board squares which allowed for a variety of games to be played with a basic set of cards. Each set of game cards had a multi-purpose game board making it possible for four players to play at one time. The center had an average daily attendance of four, with length of visits varying from forty-five minutes to three hours.

Kindergarten Start-up

Having looked at the number of children in the school who were not successful in the primary grades, the Blalock FIRST Project Director consulted with the principal about a summer initiative with the incoming kindergartners. This suggestion met with overwhelming support from the administration. Therefore, a meeting was convened with the parents of the incoming children and the idea of a ten-week enrichment program was presented to them. It would provide them with a set of materials that they would work on at home with their children.

Parents and children were sent a written invitation to participate in an orientation meeting. Out of approximately 60 children who were eligible to enter kindergarten, nearly 20 responded. Approximately 15 consistently participated. The weekly session centered around a table with a variety of different learning activities. Sessions lasted two hours each.

Parents were cautioned not to look for right or wrong answers, but to present the activity and to listen to the kinds of questions that children asked. Parents were given a large "ziplock" bag with different kinds of materials to be used in the sessions, i.e. paper, pencil, and crayons. Each of the materials was demonstrated and the parents practiced using it with their child. Each week an additional item was added to the bag and parents were given instructions to continue working on the previous experiences as well as being given new activities for the coming week. Additional items included scissors, a puzzle, a picture story book, counters, and play dough.

Children met together as a group for one structured activity. Following this block of time, a picture story book was read to the children. This was followed by a snack and a closing activity involving both parent and child.

At the end of the ten weeks, teachers were told the kinds of things that the children had been taught, their experiences, and the materials they had been given. Once school had begun teachers were interviewed. They reported that those children who had participated in the Kindergarten Start-up program had made a relatively easy, smooth transition into kindergarten.

They noted that there was a noticeable difference between those children who did participate and those who did not.

Math/Science Lab

The area of science had not been emphasized in the school in the past; however, a new emphasis system-wide was to establish science labs in the elementary schools. Further, third and fifth grade students were now being tested on science knowledge in the standardized achievement tests. Blalock FIRST assisted in organizing and equipping a Math/Science Lab to be used by all students in the school. It was equipped with manipulative materials and activities for the students to do in mathematics and science. The lab was staffed by four parent aides (paid by project funds). These were mothers who had been attending the Family Literacy Class for two years.

The parents were responsible for making inventories of the materials, arranging the equipment in the laboratories, and making bulletin boards. A weekly schedule was arranged so each class spent at least one period per week in the lab. Third and fifth grade classes had extra time each week. On a daily basis they monitored the classes, making sure students were actively engaged and on task. A reception for the staff to officially open the labs and reinforce the idea that these parents were an integral part of the school was held. The lab aides also assisted students on the computers.

Muted Cries

A book of writings by the parents in the Family Literacy Class was prepared and published. The purpose of this activity was to:

- have parents respond to open-ended statements in writing that addressed issues that they found themselves dealing with on an everyday basis;
- create a vehicle where parents could express their opinions to an audience made up of politicians and service providers that were perceived by parents as uncaring;
- create a curiosity about the community that would focus attention on the existing services that were being provided, including the school system's investigating the instruction being provided within the local elementary school.

During the course of the year, parents attending the Family Literacy Class related experience after experience where they had been made to feel humiliated because of their living circumstances. Their descriptions were consistent, whether they were interviewed individually or in groups, with reference to the type of treatment they perceived themselves receiving from service providers--the questioning procedure used to obtain monies from errant fathers; the regulations regarding occupancy in the apartments; the lack of attention to the maintenance of their housing units; the tone of voice that some professionals used to address the tenants. Parents expressed overt anger that their lack of skills placed them in what seemed like a no-win situation. The training programs that many had taken advantage of in attempts to secure a

livelihood had turned out, for the most part, to be dead-end streets. The limited amount of long-term success that most of the parents experienced and the failure of the system to come through with its promise of jobs was compounded by the ever present and increasing demands of growing children.

These women also exhibited signs of being overwhelmed and depressed. They were lethargic, verbally expressed doubts about their ability to complete tasks, found it difficult to attend and focus for long periods of time on abstract information, required constant supervision and verbal reinforcement, showed an unwillingness to accept responsibility, and were hesitant to engage in activities that took them out of their familiar surroundings. They were suspicious about sharing how much potential they really possessed for fear of losing out on benefits, having learned only too well that signs of industriousness could mean the removal of essential services. Trust needed to be re-established and an avenue for demonstration of emerging talents provided.

In order to address these issues, parents were given a series of open-ended statements and asked to choose which one they would like to write about. Parents wrote as much or as little as they liked and turned in the assignment with the understanding that, after signing the permission release, they would remain anonymous. The written responses that the parents provided were spontaneous, and one of the few writing assignments that they completed without a great deal of encouragement. As the manuscript developed, the participating parents shared more and more about the conflicting feelings they felt about being mothers in a violent environment.

The manuscript, Muted Cries, was submitted for review and the result was a two-page color feature which appeared in the weekend edition of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. The publication succeeded in raising the curiosity of the individuals in the larger Atlanta community. Following the release of the articles in the news, two radio talk shows devoted air time to the discussion of the welfare system. Twelve individuals made direct offers to assist the mother in the article. Seven businesses have contacted the school to explore becoming adoptive partners in education with the school. A production company which employs members of the community to perform has been formed. The company does workshops and mini-plays regarding women issues.

Newstart

In the spring of Year One, Blalock Elementary School's Field Day had been cancelled midway through the activities due to excessively disruptive and inappropriate student behavior. Discouraged, the physical education teacher began Year Two with considerable difficulty in her ability to manage the behavior of the students in her classes. As a result, both the administration and the school staff did not want to consider having Field Day without having a definite strategy in hand.

By January, parents in the Family Literacy Class were beginning to ask what type of Field Day was being planned which brought the issue to the attention of Blalock FIRST staff. When asked about the possibility of Field Day, the physical education teacher was adamant about not wanting to have the activities because of the students' behavior and what she felt was a lack of support on the part of the school staff. This perception was communicated to the principal, and

as a result, Blalock's principal requested Blalock FIRST staff to assist the physical education teacher in developing a plan for Field Day. A committee of teachers and Blalock FIRST staff was formed to plan Field Day.

As a result of this committee's work, Blalock FIRST's staff planned the intervention program, Newstart. It would involve pulling out seventy children who had been identified as having difficulty controlling their behavior in the classroom or in group situations and working with them on particular activities that would increase their ability to be a part of the planned activities for the actual Field Day. The list of seventy students identified was a combination of repeated teacher referrals to the office for discipline and teacher nominations.

Objectives of Newstart were to:

- provide a structured setting for identified students in which they create advertisements and awards for the upcoming Field Day;
- increase the student's ability to follow directions;
- increase the student's ability to work independently;
- increase the student's ability to work in groups;
- increase the student's ability to monitor his/her own behavior.

Schedules for working with the children were developed and distributed among the teachers. Daily monitoring sheets, class lists, and student activities were shared with the principal and instructional specialist. Students were scheduled, in most cases, for thirty-minute periods twice a week.

Students were involved in a variety of activities that reinforced the concepts being presented in their physical education classes and the type of behavior expected both on and off the field over the next thirty days. Students were expected to attend the session, begin tasks, work without bothering other students, remain in the area, and complete tasks. The behavior of the students was monitored in a group situation on a daily basis. Students were allowed to express their opinions regarding the behavior of their fellow classmates and disagree if they thought the adult in charge of recording their behavior had misinterpreted their actions. Students were made aware that they had to perform at the 95% level of success in order to be able to participate in Field Day both in the Newstart class and in their regular classrooms.

Students were escorted to and from the area where the Newstart activities were being held. At the beginning of each session, they were reminded of the limited amount of time they had available to work on the project for the day, which made it necessary for them to organize their thoughts and to begin and continue working in order to complete their daily assignments. Monitoring of the student's behavior was done on a daily basis with reminders to the students that the behavior that was demonstrated in the Newstart class was also expected by their other teachers throughout the day and would be checked by Blalock FIRST personnel.

Activities in Newstart included:

Day One:
Filling out questionnaire on appropriate behavior.
Defining Field Day, listening to Physical Education teacher's tape.
Giving examples of Field Day events in the past.

Day Two:
Making stilts for relay race.
Designing emblem for T-Shirt.
Cutting out shirt forms.

Day Three:
Designing FIRST banner to advertise Field Day.

Day Four:
Composing morning message for Field Day.
Making signs for events.

Day Five:
Listing Field Day events that they would like to participate.

Day Six:
Researching a team sport that requires a ball.

Day Seven:
Composing a story about being a good sport.

Day Eight:
Drawing a life-size figure engaged in a sports action (throwing, running, etc.).

Day Nine:
Practicing with a stop watch.

Day Ten:
Practicing marking the fields.

Day Eleven:
Researching a team sport that requires running.

Day Twelve:
Making name tags for teachers.

Day Thirteen:
Practicing Field Day events they are interested in.

Students were graded by a plus or minus rating on the following:

1. Attendance
2. Positive attitude
3. Works independently
4. Begins tasks
5. Completes tasks
6. Asks for help appropriately
7. Does not disturb others
8. Participates in class assignments

Of the seventy referrals to the program, only one child did not complete the activities, choosing on the first day not to participate and consequently not taking part in the Field Day. Of the remaining 69, all but six were able to transfer their behavior to regular classroom situations which resulted in their participating in Field Day. Twenty other students who had not participated in the intervention program were removed from the field during the activities because of their inappropriate behavior and spent the remainder of the day inside under the supervision of a teacher who had pre-arranged to have assignments for those students who were not participating.

Based on interviews with staff members, including the principal, other Field Day committee members, and children, the day's activities were considered to be a huge success. The students who did participate did so for the full day without any incident of disruptive behavior.

Saturday School

This program was designed to provide additional experiences in mathematics and reading preparation prior to the annual standardized test. Children attended for eight Saturdays for three hours per session. Classes were taught by volunteer college students who received training and supervision from the Project Director.

The original plan was to work with 100 students, a sample consisting of 25% top students, 25% low students, and 50% average students, which would be fairly representative of the school. The principal thought that would exclude some students who might benefit from the experience. Therefore, the program was opened up for all students in grades 1 to 7. A letter was sent home to parents who had to give their permission for students to attend. The first session was an orientation with the remaining sessions focusing on test-taking skills.

A group of students from Morehouse and Spelman Colleges (local colleges with predominantly African-American student bodies) served as tutors, giving them with first-hand experience in working with low-income students. Part of the time was spent on reading and mathematics skills and the rest on test-taking skills, such as following directions and listening. At the conclusion of each session, the students assembled in a large group for refreshments for approximately thirty minutes. During this time, the college students mingled with the elementary school students and talked informally.

Enough college students volunteered so that groups were kept small with two adults per group. Essentially, the same children were assigned to the same college students each week. A number of commercial test-taking workbooks were used with students in the areas of math and language arts. The groups were small enough that students were able to receive adequate individual attention.

Parents were asked to attend at least two one-hour sessions. While this did not materialize, there were several parents who came every Saturday and sat in on the sessions with their children, and these parents spent time working through many of the activities with their students.

Table Tennis Team

During Year Three, a Table Tennis Team was begun for students at Blalock. Blalock FIRST provided the equipment and the materials. A teacher at the school taught the team and supervised their practice sessions. They practiced approximately seven hours per week after school. They were provided with T-shirts as incentives. They played in the Atlanta City Recreation League. In their first tournament, the boys were playing against boys who were basically equal in their competitive abilities, and they won eight trophies. This really excited them and caused them to take a second look at their own behavior and work in the school. They also participated in a regional tournament where they did not do as well because the level of competition increased. Points emphasized were team support, team spirit, and team cooperation, concepts many of the children had not had exposure to in any kind of systematic way. The Table Tennis Team involved students in an organized activity that fostered discipline, attention, and basic fine motor, math, language, and cooperative learning skills.

Turning Point

Turning Point was a six-week program designed for pre-adolescent young girls. The intent of this program was to explore issues of importance to their distant and not-so-distant future as young African-American women regarding culture, womanhood, life skills and self-esteem. These issues were explored through discussions, reading material, video presentations, and a variety of activities including art work, games, role playing, and problem-solving opportunities.

Turning Point met on Wednesdays from 2:45 to 3:45 p.m. in the Family Resource Room. They produced a play, A Tribute to Women of Color, in which they were joined by boys from the Afterschool Program, girls from the Dance Group, and mothers from the Family Literacy Class. The play was performed at the school for the school and community. It was videotaped and shown on local educational television. A Tribute to Women of Color highlights some of the countless historical and contemporary women of color throughout the centuries. It includes original monologues, songs, and dances.

Viking Center

The Viking Center was organized to design and develop a learning environment for students who had been identified as having difficulties attending in classroom situations and to encourage teaching staff to observe effective strategies and incorporate them into their own classrooms. As a result of the responses received from the teachers on the CISS survey, the FIRST staff realized that, if changes were to occur in the instructional environment, they must plan a program for students. The Viking Center grew out of that need.

Fifteen students, Kindergarten through grade 5, participated five days a week the last of thirty minutes of the day. Students were assessed on their ability to successfully participate in the activities by demonstrating appropriate student behavior in a classroom setting.

Specific student objectives were to:

- remain in the designated area.
- look at the speaker when speaking or being spoken to.
- listen to instructions.
- follow directions that are written, spoken or presented as demonstrations.
- begin, continue in, and complete assigned tasks.
- work with others, adults and peers, cooperatively.
- work in a classroom situation without causing a disturbance to others.

The lessons focused on providing motivation and creating curiosity among the students. The children were always engaged in hands-on experiences. The goal was to help them understand what got them into trouble and to help them become more responsible for their own behavior. They were asked to consider how to get someone to respond to their needs immediately if they needed assistance. Or, if they could wait, what kinds of behaviors they could engage in that would not get them into trouble. As the children became comfortable in the learning environment, they realized for themselves that the more involved they became with the learning materials, the less disruptive their behavior.

At the beginning of every period, the participants were given directions and verbal reminders of what the expectations for successful performance entailed and that there was a limited amount of time to complete each activity. Students were escorted to and from the Viking Center by Blalock FIRST personnel, or parent volunteers. Expectations for behavior were posted in the classroom and verbal feedback was provided to each student daily on his/her behavior. Initially, students were given a tangible reward for on-task behavior in the form of a snack or sticker. By the third week, this regime of reinforcement had been replaced by praise and social reinforcers, i.e. class helpers, leadership responsibilities, participation in a class cooking activity.

Initially, students demonstrated disruptive behaviors that interfered with successful learning in the Viking Center as well as in the classroom. It was frequently observed that students did not use verbal language consistently to communicate their needs. They also found it difficult to wait while materials were passed out, or to sit quietly while another child was being given assistance. They were observed continuously moving or making noises often without being aware of what they were doing. If a new item was available in the class, there was a great deal of grabbing, hoarding, defending of turf, and occasionally throwing, wasting,

or destroying materials. It was not uncommon for students during this first week to show irritability and intolerance for others being in close proximity. Whining, tattle-telling, fidgeting, inappropriate touching, and negative verbal responses at being redirected were all products of the frustration felt by the students as they were encouraged to take part rather than be isolated from group activities.

The students, in general, appeared bewildered and helpless when asked to begin tasks on their own and required constant adult supervision. In presenting the age-appropriate assignments, verbal and written directions were given with exaggerated animation and cuing. Multiple examples, demonstrations, visual aids, and verbal prompting were all incorporated in order to have tasks completed. The quality of the work that was produced was poor. It was obvious that the children hurried through the assigned tasks. When questioned about their work, they realized that they had made careless mistakes which, after individual attention, they all wanted to correct.

After the first week, pencil-and-paper activities were abandoned and a strategy of providing the children with a ten-minute choice of manipulatives was employed. Three stations with a variety of commercial and household office materials were available, requiring eye-hand coordination, fine motor coordination, visual tracking, sequencing, classifying, problem-solving and decision-making skills. As a result of this change in strategy, participants began to interact with materials in a more purposeful manner. Having stations set up prior to the students' arrival; limiting the number of people who worked at a station; introducing new materials to the entire group prior to it being displayed; allowing ample time for exploration; rotating materials frequently; and providing adults to act as roving monitors contributed significantly to the observed improvement.

Open-ended tasks and materials were chosen in order to encourage exploration, creativity, and expressive language. The effect of children becoming absorbed in projects that they initiated and controlled produced longer periods of attending. Children observably became more willing to make mistakes, rethink their approach to solving problems, correct errors and continue. Following the opening ten-minute session of hands-on activity, students were brought together as a group to expand a concept that was a part of the exploratory experience (i.e., function, origin, category, physical properties) which later became a language experience story. The group spent the last ten minutes engaged in a group game to promote further their ability to work cooperatively, listen, follow directions, control their emotions, and to verbally express themselves in an appropriate manner.

Students typically did better in group situations when there were frequent opportunities for involvement; personal space was well-defined and maintained; materials were highly graphic or three dimensional; and information was presented in short segments. Additional factors that seemed to favorably influence the children included: clear and consistent communication as to what was acceptable behavior; an attractive and inviting learning environment; timed activities; a combination of exploratory and traditional lecture formats; positive verbal feedback; consistent and predictable consequences; and actively encouraging the children to have input in making some of the decisions.

Three weeks into the start-up of the Viking Center, the school administration changed, which resulted in the Center closing for a week until it was clear that the incoming

administration supported the FIRST project. The interim principal met consistently with Blalock FIRST staff during the next week listening to and sharing similar observations on the need and strategies for instituting a school-wide approach to increased overall discipline.

The existence of the Viking Center received positive ratings from both students and teachers. Teachers made additional requests to send more children to the center and non-participating students inquired about the procedure they would need to take to become a part of the Viking Center. Children wanted to come because, "They had discovered that they could be successful at something" in the center. Some teachers supported the center because it provided them a respite away from difficult children.

The design of the Viking Center was to demonstrate alternative ways of interacting with children for teachers to adopt in their classrooms. While teachers accepted the Viking Center as a pull-out program and wanted its services, the administrators felt, from classroom observations, that teachers remained resistant to changing their personal styles of instruction. Convincing teachers to make changes that challenged their way of operating for years was not a task that could be accomplished easily or quickly.

The Viking Center demonstrated that children will commit themselves to a learning environment in which they experience success that they find purposeful despite their achievement or behavioral level. By December, the participants were successful in meeting the criteria of the class.

In the winter, the focus of the Viking Center changed to working with students who were in the second quartile on the previous year's achievement tests, believing they could profit from this instruction and improve their scores on that year's standardized tests. The change made teachers take responsibility for children who had been disruptive and caused them to make changes in their classes. Blalock FIRST staff strongly felt that teachers would never change as long as they had an option to continue with the status quo.

Changing the participants in the Viking Center proved frustrating to teachers because children who had been receiving additional attention and alternative strategies were now back in a classroom that had not made similar adjustments for their behavior. Teachers, according to the principal, further saw the change in the students who participated in the Viking Center as the removal of a support system that, while they would not admit it, allowed them not to have to deal with difficult children. An additional source of irritation to teachers was that referrals to the office for discipline under the new administration were no longer accepted without the teacher documenting that they had attempted a variety of strategies to address the inappropriate behaviors.

The strategy of instituting change then became one of approaching teachers who showed the least resistance to change. Overtures to the staff following the success of the Viking Center indicated that some were now ready to accept some type of intervention in their own classrooms.

Appendix B
Implementation of Objectives by Year

OBJECTIVES			BLALOCK FIRST PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED		
			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
1. To increase achievement in reading and mathematics of the students in Kindergarten through Grade 7.	a. Student achievement will improve through new instructional efforts.	1) Implement grade level improvement projects in reading and mathematics. 2) Share newly acquired skills at inservice meetings.	- Kindergarten Start-up Program	- CISS Reading Initiatives	- Saturday School - Math/Science Lab - Sharing of instructional projects with school leadership team (administrators & representative group of teachers) and at faculty meetings
	b. Teachers will acquire new teaching skills.	1) Teachers will learn to provide information/ knowledge in smaller doses. 2) Teachers will learn to elicit students' responses through the use of higher order questioning techniques. 3) Teachers will attend workshops on math and reading.	***	- Viking Center - Newstart - CISS projects - Inservice workshops presented by the Atlanta Public School system staff development personnel	- Daily vocabulary word incorporated into morning announcements - Teacher staffing changes recommended to principal - Math/Science Lab
	c. Parents will acquire new skills.	1) Parents will acquire skills in math concepts pre-kindergarten through grade 7. 2) Parents will acquire skills in reading and writing concepts.	- Parent workshops on topics of interest as a part of the Family Literacy Class. - Family Literacy Class		

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*** *Year 1 functioned as a pilot year; not all objectives were implemented in Year 1.*

OBJECTIVES			BLALOCK FIRST PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED		
			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
2. To increase student attendance.	a. Blalock students will increase percentage of days in school.	1) Blalock FIRST will provide awareness regarding attendance. 2) A grade level incentive program will be initiated. 3) Individual students will be given awards for the most improved attendance.	- Attendance incentive rewarded with an ice cream party	- Attendance reminders - Attendance incentive rewarded with a pizza party	- Back-to-School Flyers on being prepared for school - Attendance buttons for improved or perfect attendance
3. To reduce the number of students who are retained and/or placed in remedial programs (Chapter 1 and REP).	a. Classroom Instructional Support System (CISS) will be implemented.	1) Teachers will provide instructional materials and strategies to be matched with the needs of potential retainees. Matching will be based on test scores, observations, and work samples.	***	- Instructional Reproduction Center - Parents were asked to send students to school on a regular basis, remind them of appropriate behavior, and encourage their efforts - Viking Center - Newstart - CISS initiatives on reading and mathematics	- Table tennis team - Dinosaur project (CISS) - Art initiative to improve behavior (CISS)
	b. Parents will participate in retainee/remedial reduction projects.	1) Parents will be provided with materials and strategies matched to the needs of the retainees. 2) Parent workshops on teaching and coaching strategies will be implemented.	- Family Literacy Class - Kindergarten Start-up	- Family Literacy Class	- Family Literacy Class

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*** *Year 1 functioned as a pilot year; not all objectives were implemented in Year 1.*

OBJECTIVES			BLALOCK FIRST PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED		
			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
4. To increase the students' self-esteem.	a. Parents will be exposed to concepts involving self-esteem.	1) Parents will participate in workshops to enhance their self-esteem in order to enhance their children's self-esteem. 2) Parents will be given training on enhancing their children's self-esteem.	***	- Family Literacy Class - Muted Cries writing project - Girls' Dance Group - Parents were encouraged to take leadership roles and to serve as volunteers - Employment of parents in the Family Literacy Class as cafeteria monitors	- Family Literacy Class - Employment of parents as aides in Math/Science Lab
	b. Students will be exposed to concepts involving self-esteem.	1) Students will participate in activities related to self-concept and self-esteem.	***	- Afterschool Program - Girls' Dance Group - Turning Point - Viking Center - Mother's Day Essay on the most influential person in their life - Appreciation Tea, Mother/Son Banquet, and Honors' Day Reception	- Recognition of every student on their birthday - Afterschool Program - Saturday School - Table Tennis Team
5. To increase teachers' expectations for student achievement.	a. Staff development will occur through the Classroom Instructional Support System.	1) Research on teaching strategies related to math and reading will be provided by the project staff to increase knowledge of successful measures that have been established. 2) Teachers will be administered a teachers' self-rating scale regarding student expectations. 3) Teachers will develop, implement and evaluate instructional projects based on information learned on the teacher's CISS self-rating scale.	- Inservice workshops on standardized test results, team building, and new trends in math/reading	- Skills inventory - Inservice workshops on use of manipulatives, whole language, learning environments, behavior management - CISS (teacher self-rating scales and short-term projects)	- Staff reassignment recommendations - Inservice workshops in mathematics

*** *Year 1 functioned as a pilot year; not all objectives were implemented in Year 1.*

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OBJECTIVES			BLALOCK FIRST PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED		
			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
6. To implement the Classroom Improvement Support System project (CISS) in classrooms.	a. Classroom Improvement Support System projects will be introduced to the faculty. b. Classroom Improvement Support System Projects will be implemented by the faculty.	1) Teachers will be asked to propose a CISS project for their classrooms. 2) Teachers will be provided instructional support and resources to implement their CISS project.	***	- Grade-level and school-wide Reading Improvement Initiatives - Newstart	- HUGS (art classroom management project) - Dinosaur research project
7. To increase the involvement and cooperation of the students' families.	a. Parent workshops will increase motivation for family involvement.	1) Parent-to-parent activities will be initiated. 2) Parents will be enlisted to recruit additional parent involvement.	- Community workshop on motivation - Parent social programs	- Family Literacy Class and related social events - Recruitment of parents by other parents - Publication of project newsletter and Muted Cries - Community events and PTA conferences - Focus on Family - Workshops with presentations by Crime Prevention, housing officials, Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library, Families in Action (self-esteem), kindergarten teacher (floral arrangement), and a school supply company representative	- School/Community events, including a breakfast for PTA officers; field trips to Parent Teacher Center (Howard School), city-wide PTA meeting, and food bank to assist in distributing commodity foods - Workshops with international visitors, a juvenile judge, and a crime prevention specialist - Garden club, sponsored through Families in Action
	b. Support Systems will provide for parents.	1) Networking and group and individual counseling will be provided. 2) Parents will initiate projects to provide a support for content-learned and for personal needs.	- Parent networking through participation in the Family Literacy Class and sharing of expertise and interests - Community involvement, with increased opportunities to dialogue with school, civic, and community leaders - GED classes established in the community - Parent volunteers in the school - Parent-child interaction with increased opportunities for parents to observe different interactive styles between adults, between adults and children, and between children and children		

*** *Year 1 functioned as a pilot year; not all objectives were implemented in Year 1.*

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OBJECTIVES			BLALOCK FIRST PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED		
			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
8. To increase the community support for and involvement in the school activities.	a. Community agencies will be linked through a community Interagency Council.	1) Community resources will be matched with school's needs.	- Tutoring by members of a community church for adults taking the GED - Transportation provided by MARTA for community activities - Participation in a conference with school administration to set school goals - Community meetings with: Bankhead Interagency Council, Bankhead Management Office, Recreation Department, Bankhead Tenant Association, Representatives from a local church	- Tutoring of students by community church, coordinated by Blalock - FIRST - Community workshops held jointly on self-esteem with: Families in Action; Atlanta Police Department Crime Prevention; Atlanta-Fulton County Public Libraries to provide ongoing exposure to literature for parents by regularly visiting the parent group and reading excerpts from short stories, inspirational works, to increase awareness among parents of available library services, to plan for PALS laboratory; Atlanta Housing Authority officials to provide opportunities for parents to discuss concerns with reference to housing; with Literacy Action regarding literacy needs; with business leaders, school officials - Community coordination with Bankhead Community Recreation Center regarding use of recreation facility for Dance Group	- Community workshops held jointly with juvenile court judge, crime prevention officer, Families in Action, and Chamber of Commerce, and a parent support group - Community garden project with Families in Action - Adult literacy classes with Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library in their PALS laboratory in the satellite library

*** *Year 1 functioned as a pilot year; not all objectives were implemented in Year 1.*

Appendix C

Blalock FIRST Dissemination Efforts

Books:

Steele, T. A. (1991). Muted Cries. Douglasville, GA: Troy Publishing.

Articles:

Steele, T. A. (nd). Developing support systems within schools. Atlanta, GA: ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. tba.

Steele, T. A. Utilizing the parent center concept as a means to improve relations between parent and child/school and community. Atlanta, GA: ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. tba.

Media Products:

Hill, M. M., & Steele, T. A. (1991). Tribute to Women of Color. Videotape. Atlanta, GA: WPBA Channel 30.

Conference Presentations:

Young, J. C. (March 1991). "Strategies that Enable Parents to Help Children Learn to Read," Southern Association on Children Under Six Conference, Atlanta, Georgia.

Young, J. C., Steele, T. A., & Hill, M. M. (March 1991). "Blalock FIRST: Empowering Parents to Teach Reading--What Works and Why," Georgia Council of the International Reading Association, Atlanta, Georgia.

Young, J. C. (April 1991). "Family Literacy: An Issue in the '90s," Head Start Conference, St. Simons Island, Georgia.

Young, J. C. (October 1991). "Blalock FIRST: A School-Based Family Literacy Program," National Black Child Development Institute Conference, St. Louis, Missouri.

Young, J. C., Nurss, J. R., & Steele, T. A. (March 1992). "Blalock FIRST: A School/Community-based Family Literacy Program," Georgia Family Literacy Symposium, Atlanta, Georgia.